

Springtime of the Soul

Lent 2022



Welcome to our Lenten guide, Springtime of the Soul

The wonder of Springtime is that Spring, in some areas of the United States, begins with the earth frozen and cold and ends with a warming, sprouting earth. We search for the snow-drop blossoms tucked beneath the barren bushes. The world seems empty.

The wonder of the human soul, I prefer to call it the human spirit, is that even when one's spirit is diminished, is lethargic, is almost empty, we have the potential, like Springtime, to experience a renewal of life, to blossom.

During these days of Lent, generous, creative, and prayerful women and men are offering to us, each day, a glimpse of their spirit, their soul as they share their reflections on the daily scriptures during Lent and, yes, Easter. The invitation to walk with these Lenten guides is an invitation to be a part of a community that is large with life, a community composed of writers and reflectors and prayers. What a gift!

In one of the Easter accounts shared with us by Jesus' beloved disciple, John, we hear the words "the disciple bent down to see into the empty tomb and he saw and believed." In John's experience, empty is a blessing, a good, an invitation to go beyond ourselves and find life where it is. And John goes on to say "... and the disciple believed."

May this Lenten journey carry you, through the inspired words of our writers, from the darkness of a Winter world to the glorious light of Spring.

She saw and believed!

He saw and believed!

We see and believe! Amen. Alleluia!

*Carol Crepeau CSJ
La Grange Park, IL*

Cover photo: Joellen Sbrissa CSJ, La Grange Park, IL

ASH WEDNESDAY - MARCH 2

SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:12-18

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 12-13, 14 and 17

2 Corinthians 5: 20-6:22

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

REFLECTION

“Return to me with your whole heart”

Joel 2: 12

“We are ambassadors for Christ”

2 Cor. 5:20

Love, who summons our return, breathes all creation into being, sustains and moves all to future fullness. This Love presents in every aspect of the cosmos—no exceptions! Love within creation collaborates to present as human. All is one. Look around: fertile fields turn to desert, people migrate across the planet, walls shout “no room in the inn,” species die, a pandemic, violence, and rage... no wonder the cries, “where is their God?” And Love within all creation pleads, “Return to me with your whole heart/Self!”

How big is my heart? Are there revelations of God I exclude or refuse to cherish? Is my heart hardened to love? Good questions for “The Congregation of the Great Love of God” and for all baptized called to be Ambassadors for Christ (the incarnation of Love). “Christ, for those who can see, shines in the diaphanous universe, through the cosmos and in matter.” (Teilhard) Ambassadors promote, re-present the one who sends them—Christ!

PRAYER

O Spirit of Love, lure our hearts into alignment with your Love. Expand our hearts to include all in your Love. Flow through us with your compassion and care that in our presence all creation may experience your Beloved Christ.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will lean into the heart of Christ this Lent, asking that my heart throb and overflow with Love for all that presents God.

*Pat Bergen, CSJ
Westchester, IL*



THURSDAY - MARCH 3

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Psalms 1: 1-2, 3, 4 and 6

Luke 9: 22-25

REFLECTION

“For whoever wishes to save his life will loose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

Luke 9:24

Whoever loses his life... What is being asked of us?

When I set aside my needs to grocery shop for a neighbor who cannot leave her house.

When I write letters to a faraway friend who has recently moved to assisted living in a place where she knows no one.

When I rake my neighbor’s leaves because her arthritis won’t let her fingers grasp the rake anymore.

When I set down my book right before I learn “who done it” in order to free my lap so my sick cat can sleep there.

Am I loosing my life? Those bits of “oh so precious” time I wanted for myself? Or am I saving my life by stepping outside myself and doing for others as Jesus would have me do?

This piece of scripture I chose for my reflection made me stop and consider in what ways I am willing to loose my life every day in order to do the things for others that take me out of my comfort zone. The way Jesus constantly did. And when those things become part of life isn’t that saving life?

PRAYER

Jesus, help me find ways every day to loose my life for others.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

To set my ego aside and listen to my heart.

*Linda Matonich, CSJ Associate
La Grange, IL*



FRIDAY - MARCH 4

SCRIPTURE

Is 58: 1-9

Ps. 51: 3-6, 18-19

Mt 9: 14-15

REFLECTION

“For you do not desire sacrifice My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite, humble heart, O God, you will not spurn.”

Ps. 51: 18-19

Psalm 51 is a prayer of repentance, fitting for the season of Lent. Remember learning the Act of Contrition? “O, my God, I’m heartily sorry for having offended thee...”

Remember going to confession? “I disobeyed my parents.” “I fought with my brothers and sisters.” “I lied.” It became kind of a grocery list every week. Say an Act of Contrition. “O, my God, I’m heartily sorry...”

A heart contrite and humble you will not spurn.

Hopefully our “grocery list” has become more caring and thoughtful. What is a contrite spirit? What do I regret? For what am I sorry? Did I take time to call someone who is lonely? Did I buy extra food for the hungry? Did I stop to listen to that person who needed to talk? Did I refrain from saying that hurtful remark? Did I visit somebody who was sick? Did I take time to send a thank you note or email?

A heart contrite and humble you will not spurn.

What about that humble heart? The majority of us are not in the spotlight, we don’t make the national news or a headline in the newspaper. Most of our lives are spent doing the small things in our part of the world. Small things done with a humble heart - what are those things in your life?

PRAYER

Accept, O God, my contrite heart. Forgive me for what I have done and what I have failed to do.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Do what we can for others without looking for praise or recognition.

*Frankie Dutil, CSJ
Westchester, IL*



SATURDAY – MARCH 5

SCRIPTURE

Is 58: 9-14

Ps 86: 1-6

Lk 5: 27-32

REFLECTION

Jesus said...“I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.” (Lk 5:32)

“Thus, says the Holy One: If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; the Holy One will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. God will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails.”(Is 58:9b-11)

With our ashes barely faded from Wednesday’s ritual, we move toward the first week of another Lent. And, here in Isaiah, the voice of God speaks calling us not to what we should “give up.” but rather to what we should take on: removing oppression, false accusation and malicious speech from our midst—greatly needed in our divided cities, nation, by our wounded earth, and perhaps in our own lives. We are called to: hear the cry of those who are poor and bestow bread on the hungry, satisfy the afflicted, rather than “giving up” sweets or TV or whatever other personal addiction we’d like to work on this year.

If, as we walk with Jesus these 40 days, we repent our sins, whether against our neighbor, our earth, ourselves; commit to these actions, light will rise for and in us—we will have no cause for gloom. We will be given plenty, even in this seemingly parched land—whether parched of water or spirit. We will become the garden, the spring of Christ-life which never fails.

PRAYER

Holy One, draw me ever closer to you as I walk with Jesus throughout these 40 days.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

May I be open today to repentance and the grace to take whatever action I can to remove oppression and be God’s light wherever I am.



Christine Parks, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - MARCH 6

SCRIPTURE

Dt 26: 4-10

Ps 91: 1-2, 10-15

Rom 10: 8-13

Lk 4: 1-13

REFLECTION

“Be with me Lord when I am in trouble.” Ps 91: 15b

Lest we doubt that Jesus is fully human, the Church places before us each first Sunday of Lent one of the accounts of Jesus’ temptation in the desert. Today’s account is from the gospel of Luke. Immediately following his baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit of God into the desert. There he faces three temptations all humans must face before they dare take on any kind of power—as Jesus is about to do. They are all temptations to the misuse of power for purposes less than God’s purpose (Rohr). Scholars point out that in the gospel, Jesus wields no power at all except in regard to spirits and demons. Viewed from this perspective, the story of Jesus’ refusal to abuse the power he has, offers us as Americans something very relevant to ponder. Jesus, master of discernment, resists with clarity, determination, and decisiveness. What gives Jesus courage? Jesus’ absolute adherence to his Father’s plan for humanity.

PRAYER

Be with me Lord when I am in trouble. Ps 91: 15b

May I hear and act on the Cry of the Earth in the
Cry of the Poor this Lent.

May our struggles and our concern for this planet
never take away the joy of our hope.

Laudato Si

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

How will we, the Congregation use our moral power
to speak for silent Earth?

What one small thing will I do today to save/savor Earth?

*Cynthia Sabathier, CSJ
Baton Rouge, LA*



MONDAY - MARCH 7

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18

Psalm 19: 8-10, 15

Matthew 25: 31-46

REFLECTION

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Leviticus 19:18b

In the first reading after ten “You shall nots,” comes the “You shall.” “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” From my youth to this day I am more readily moved by the positive than by the negative, and so I will concentrate on “You shall!”

Loving your neighbor depends on loving yourself as God loves you. And how does God love you? You need only to pay attention to the miracle of your breathing, which you are doing right now without any effort of your own, or watch the sunrise on any given morning with its layers of moving color, even when it’s happening behind a cloud, or recall what you know about the life of Jesus, the Son of God, who became one of us, who lived among us and showed us how to love. Jesus, human and divine, gave every moment of his life out of love for us. Each of us is indeed precious in God’s eyes. God delights in each of us. God loves each of us unconditionally.

As you continue to grow in the belief that you are loved, you will also grow in loving your neighbor as yourself, as God loves that person, and all the “shall nots” in the Ten Commandments will take care of themselves. Love conquers everything.

PRAYER

Loving God, I believe that you love me and I am grateful.
I desire to love you and my neighbor in deed and in truth.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Before I go to bed tonight I will prayerfully look over my day and recall the times I experienced love, and the times I loved my neighbor as myself, and give thanks for both.

*Maria Hill, CSJ
Brookfield, IL*



TUESDAY - MARCH 8

SCRIPTURE

Is 55: 10-11

Ps 34: 4-7, 16-19

Mt 6: 7-15

REFLECTION

"... your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Mt 6: 10

God's words and actions are meant to penetrate our hearts, to be sustenance for our souls, to lift us up and occasionally... ok, quite often, challenge us. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, as spoken by Jesus in today's gospel of Mathew, we are petitioning God for an experience of heaven here on earth. How might God interpret our words and actions? Or, inaction? The expectation here is that we will give something and receive something in return. Are we sowing seeds of life and unity and peace? Sharing our bread with the hungry? Offering forgiveness? Are we reverencing Earth and all that fills it as a sacred heavenly realm?

Perhaps today's readings are inviting us to re-examine this prayer with a renewed awareness that there is an active role for each of us. Let us experience God's glory together. Become a living prayer! Penetrate hearts! On Earth as in heaven!

PRAYER

God of Heaven and Earth, You assure us that every word that goes forth from your mouth does not return to you void,
but accomplishes that for which it was sent.

Help us to find ways, no matter how small, to fill the voids that exist around us.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Become a living prayer - animate God's love!

*Barb McCartney, CSJ
Charleston, WV*



WEDNESDAY - MARCH 9

SCRIPTURE

Jon. 3: 1-10

Ps. 51: 3-4, 12-13, 18-19

Lk 11: 29-32

REFLECTION

*Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time:
"Go to the city of Nineveh and proclaim the message I give you."*

Jon. 3: 1-2

The story of Jonah and the whale is one which is familiar to most of us since childhood. Which one of us was not fascinated by a man being eaten by a whale and then spewed out? This story, however, is the story of many adults. God calls. Jonah runs the other way. God calls again. Jonah does what God asks. He appears to be following God fully, but when God shows graciousness and love to his enemy, Jonah becomes angry at God for God's generosity. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt a call from God and did not respond at first? Maybe God had to be the Hound of Heaven before you agreed to move towards God's desire. Has there ever been a time when you responded to God reluctantly, hoping for the best outcome for yourself, but not for those around you?

PRAYER

God, I know you are a gracious and compassionate God,
slow to anger and abounding in love.

May I be open to your goodness not only for myself,
but also for those around me whom I find difficult.

Help me to reflect your compassion and love.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

The decisions I make today will reflect the call in Laudato Si.
They will be loving and compassionate to the earth
and the dear neighbor.

*Ann Letourneau, CSJ
Westchester, IL*



THURSDAY - MARCH 10

SCRIPTURE

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

Ps. 138:1-3,7-8

Mt. 7:7-12

REFLECTION

"I thank you, Lord, with all my heart. When I cried out, you answered: you strengthened my spirit. Though I walk in the midst of dangers, you guard my life when my enemies rage."

Ps. 138: 1,3, 7

We hear a lot about gratitude these days. There are gratitude journals, coffee mugs, socks and sweatshirts. What has made this word such a "hot topic?" Why is it so?

In researching the word, gratitude is a spontaneous feeling, but is also valued as a practice: a conscious effort to count one's blessings. Gratitude generates a climate of positivity that both reaches inward and outward. Practice gratitude enough, and you'll be in a "habit loop," created to instill a spontaneous response.

I hear Mother Earth singing David's song as nations try to figure out how to save her from our destructive ways. My "habit loops" of rejecting bottled water, recycling, composting, and consolidating trips are a few ways that I try to protect her. But how does this climate of positivity reach outward? How am I "when my enemies rage?" Do I respond to requests to write to our government representatives? Do I engage in local initiatives to protect Earth, building community in the process?

Lots to do. It's more than wearing a sweatshirt or using a coffee mug, but what a "loop" I can generate to remind grateful hearts.

PRAYER

Lord, help me. You know me. Strengthen my spirit.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Protect Earth. Be grateful and say so every night.

*Kathy Jeffers, CSJ Associate
Beaver, PA*



FRIDAY - MARCH 11

SCRIPTURE

Ez 18: 21-28

Ps 130: 1-8

Mt 5:20-26

REFLECTION

"If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right.

Then and only then, come back and work things out with God."

Mt.5:24 The Message

Today's readings clearly are there to make us "straighten out our act". Ezekiel speaks of a person who finally gets it and tries to change and lead a good life, but also speaks of the good person who decides in the end to go for a fling at sinning. We see a forgiving God in the first case and God who strongly warns in the second case that years of goodness won't save you if in the end you turn to evil.

I know I need to heed Matthew's words and find the good and not get overpowered by the evil or wrong that may appear before me or in me. Make it right, Matthew urges us. That meeting we have with God each day in prayer demands that we do right with and for our neighbor. How do we truly get rid of prejudices when we don't always see them in ourselves? How do we protect our earth when greed and power overwhelm our efforts? How do we deal with violence outside ourselves and in our own reactions? Prayerful meditation on Psalm 130 might be a partial answer. Hear the words, "Out of the depths I cry to you! In your Mercy, hear my voice!" Psalms for Praying by Nan C. Merrill

PRAYER

Who am I, my God, that you should love me so? Help me to bring your love to those I meet this day. Make us one in loving you.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

That I may see the goodness around and in me
and give God thanks.

*Judy Sikorski, CSJ
La Grange Park, IL*



SATURDAY – MARCH 12

SCRIPTURE

Dt 26: 16-19

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

Mt 5:43-48

REFLECTION

“I shall do your will; do not ever abandon me wholly.”

Ps 119:8

Dt 26:16-19 Mt 5:48

When thinking about time or seasons, liturgical calendars or personal event calendars, one can sense that there is an “eve” or a “closing” of events. Lent has just begun. Tomorrow begins Daylight Saving Time. The Winter Olympics had the closing ceremony recently. We are still living with the coronavirus as we mark three years. Our lives have changed our marking of the eve of celebrations, births, and visitation with friends and family. Just as we marked the eve of the roll out of the vaccines, may we mark the close of the deaths the virus has brought. Whatever eve or closing you may be facing; the scripture today reminds us: “Today you have obtained this declaration...God will be your God...and God has obtained this declaration from you: you will be [God’s] own...who observes all God’s commands with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Dt 26:16-19 and Mt 5:48 instructs us: “You must set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none.”

PRAYER

Generous One of boundless love, gift us with the grace of loving without boundaries of any kind. Let no time, nor space of time, nor circumstance prevent us from marking your presence with us. Receive our declaration to love you with all our heart and soul.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will approach each day as a gift of love from Gracious God and close each day the same way.

*Karen Kirby, CSJ
St. Clairsville, OH*



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT - MARCH 13

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 15: 5-12,17-18

Psalm 27: 1, 7-9, 13-14

Philippians 3: 17-4:1

Luke 9: 20-36

REFLECTION

"It is good that we are here."

Luke 9: 33

At the wedding, the guests gathered in the chapel in joyous anticipation. As the couple processed into the chapel, their faces were radiant as they saw their family and friends. When they professed their vows, their love shone brightly. A pinnacle moment. A mountain top moment. Indeed, it was good that we were there.

Their faith and witness called each of us to rejoice and to remember our own vows and life commitments. Their courageous YES to all that will unfold in their lives reminded us of the power of love and God's faithfulness. And indeed, it was good that we were there.

Throughout our lives there are moments when we are brought into deeper awareness of the power and presence of love. We are called to pay attention and sink into these moments...not to grasp them tightly, but to experience them as gift, as grace, and bring them forward as reminders to live in love. And remember, it is good that we are here.

PRAYER

Good and gracious God, open our minds and hearts to experience your love on both the mountain tops and valleys of life. Give us the awareness of your presence and abundant love, so that we may be open to share that love with all we meet. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each day make note of the positive times when it was good that you are there.

*Kathy Brazda, CSJ
Chicago, IL*



MONDAY - MARCH 14

SCRIPTURE

Dan 9: 4-10

Ps 79: 8-9, 11, 13

Lk 6 :36-38

REFLECTION

*“Do not hold past inequities against us; may compassion come quickly...”
Psalm 79:8*

This psalm is a communal lament about the destruction of Jerusalem and the people’s realization their actions have played a part in the destruction. One of the hardest lessons for a human to learn is the acceptance of responsibility for one’s own actions and then to forgive oneself for those actions. Many times, this is a journey of a lifetime. Where we may begin to understand the connection of our actions towards others, our Earth, ourselves, we may never offer compassion to ourselves. It is much easier for us to offer compassion to others before we offer compassion to ourselves.

In Laudato Si Pope Francis quotes Benedict, “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.” And then adds, “For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.” Forgiving ourselves for our past actions is part of the interior conversion process. How do we make peace with the ways we’ve taken our world, our neighbors, and ourselves for granted?

PRAYER

God of Great Love, help us to open our eyes to the destruction we’ve caused to others, to the Earth, to ourselves. Teach us to transform our inequities into Love with compassion and mercy for all, especially ourselves.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

This evening as you review the day, remember to give compassion to yourself as you examine the encounters with and without our God of Love. How are you living each day as a protector in union with God’s handiwork?

*Kate Theriot, CSJ Associate
Houma, LA*



TUESDAY - MARCH 15

SCRIPTURE

Is 1:10, 16-29

Ps 50: 8-9, 16-17, 21, 23

Mt 23: 1-12

REFLECTION

“The greatest among you must be your servant.” Mt 23: 11

The truth the Gospel proclaims is so radical, so revolutionary. Thus, there exists the constant temptation to domesticate the Gospel, to compromise what it asks, to make it more “user friendly.” God is so much more lavish than I dare to believe, so much more generous with grace than I desire, dreams for me a future of becoming so much larger than my own expectations. We are made in the image of God and that is the likeness God yearns for us to be, longs for us to live. God asks nothing of us God has not already done. There is a tendency to speak of God as all-powerful and “in control.” “Who is greater than God?” we challenge. Yet, God comes to serve not to be served. No one can take the last place because God already has. No one is humbler than God. Humility is not denigrating oneself. Humility is becoming who we are most meant to be, becoming like God, becoming Love.

PRAYER

Give me a new heart and a new spirit.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will try to remember today: I will be like God
and be the servant of all.

*Marcella Clancy, CSJ
Detroit, MI*



WEDNESDAY - MARCH 16

SCRIPTURE

Jer 18: 18-20

Ps 31: 5-6, 14-16

Mt 20: 17-28

REFLECTION

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached him with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom."

Mt 20: 20-21

A few weeks ago, I was coming home from the grocery store. At the red light I noticed the bumper sticker on the car in front of me. It read: "Jesus love you, but I'm his favorite." I guess there are moments when each of us would like to know that we are God's favorite. In the reading from Matthew, the mother of James and John wanted to be sure her sons were God's favorite, and asked that one of her son's be on each side of Jesus.

Perhaps the good news is that each of us is God's favorite. As we look around us at creation, we can see that God has created amazing beauty just for us to enjoy. With the coming of spring the trees are beginning to bud forth, flowers of many colors are blooming, rivers are flowing, beauty is all around us to remind us of God's desire to show us how favored we are. And these are just some of the ways that God reaches out to express God's love for each of us.

PRAYER

Loving God, you express to us in so many ways that we are loved, and yet many of these messages we miss each day. Grant us listening hearts that we may be reassured of the special place you offer us as your daughters and sons.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

As we move through today, let us notice the many ways in which God sends us messages that we are God's favorite.

*Rose Ann Hefner, CSJ
Charleston, WV*



THURSDAY - MARCH 17

SCRIPTURE

Jer. 17: 5-10

Ps. 1: 1-4, 6

Lk. 16: 19-31

REFLECTION

“They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them.”

Luke 16: 29

St. Patrick might have an issue with the readings for today. Instead of shamrocks and shillalas, the gospel recounts the story of Lazarus and the beggar who sits at “Abraham’s lap” while Lazarus, the wealthy man from whom he had begged simple sustenance languishes in hell, asking for a second chance, if not for himself, then at least for his five brothers. The story presents a powerful image of missed opportunities and later regrets.

Many lessons could be drawn from the story; sharing not from abundance, but from whatever I have that helps another; opening my heart to recognize the needs of others, realizing that what is freely given should be freely shared.

I have a bit of empathy for Lazarus and am reminded of a phrase a friend shared about forgiveness: “We are a church of second chances.”

Lazarus had many second chances but failed to have a change of heart. I believe our God of expansive and all-inclusive Love continues to provide myriad second chances when we open our eyes and hearts to the needs of others, let go of small grudges, and sincerely forgive petty (or not so petty) grievances.

PRAYER

God of limitless mercy and forgiveness, I am grateful for the many “second chances” I have received. Help me to be a peacemaker rather than a grudge keeper in this often-contentious world.

CHALLENGE

I will use these Lenten days to be more patient and less easily irritated by the “little things” that can unsettle my day.



*Jean McGrath, CSJ
Chicago, IL*

FRIDAY - MARCH 18

SCRIPTURE

Gn 34: 3-4, 12-13, 17-28

Ps 105: 16-21

Mt 21: 33-43, 45-46

REFLECTION

*“After all, he is our brother, our own flesh. His brothers agreed.”
Genesis 37: 22*

As I put myself in this scene with Joseph and the brothers plotting to kill him and eventually selling him to a group of traders heading for Egypt, I find myself attracted to Reuben. This brother wants to save Joseph. At first, I applaud him and am convinced I would try to do the same. Pondering though, I realize that Reuben is something of a coward in that he does not confront his brothers about their evil intent. Instead, he suggests they throw Joseph in a well where Reuben intends to save him later. But, later does not come for Reuben. Joseph is not killed by his brothers, but instead sold into slavery.

So, what am I hearing about my affinity for Reuben? I think his heart is in the right place, as is mine. I wish, though, that Reuben had been more assertive with his brothers and confronted their evil intent head-on.

PRAYER

Holy God, may we always remember that all share the same earth, the same human existence, and are born to live with one another. Help us to respect each person as sister and brother. May we all agree on this one day soon.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will pray for the courage to call out injustice whenever I encounter it and not skirt around it.

*Barbara Boyd
Indian Head Park, IL*



SATURDAY – MARCH 19

SCRIPTURE

2 Sm 7: 4-5, 12-14, 16

Ps. 89: 2-5, 22, 29

Rom 4: 13, 16-18, 22

Mt 1: 16, 18-21, 24

REFLECTION

“...the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph...Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel.”

Mt. 1: 19-21

Pondering. Pondering a lot during these pandemic days. Lately, the phrase, Peril and Promise, has come to mind many times as I watch the news, listen to NPR (which has a project on climate called Peril and Promise), and pray, that is, ponder God’s way of Love in all of this, in all of our lives on earth.

Today’s readings on the feast of our patron, Joseph, man of faith, invite us to ponder deeply. The personages of Abraham, David, Joseph, Mary, an angel or two, and Jesus are all highlighted as figures who fulfill God’s promises. They all lived in perilous times and listened to the voice of God, not just their own small voices. The bridge between the peril of “putting Mary away quietly” and Joseph’s brave and loving decision to “take her as his wife” comes in a dream. Maybe we need to listen more closely to our hopes and dreams when faced with perilous times like now. When we are most vulnerable, when we ponder God’s pathway ahead of us, and not wring our hands in despair or hopelessness, angels will come. We, too, can remain faithful and loving and fearless, as individuals and communities of faith. Ponder the promise in times of peril.

PRAYER

God of Promise, I look to the future with hope in my heart.
Change me, change your church to be heralds of hope and
promise for our earth, our world. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will speak with a friend or friends about my hopes for the future,
not dwelling on these violent, perilous times. Be an angel to
someone. Live in the Light!

*Janet Franklin, CSJ
New Roads, LA*



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT - MARCH 20

SCRIPTURE

Ex 3: 1-8, 13-15

Ps 103: 1-8, 11

1 Cor 10: 1-6, 10-12

Lk 13: 1-9

REFLECTION

“I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future.” Lk 13: 8-9

In this parable, there are two very different perspectives regarding the fig tree that was bearing no fruit. On one hand, there is the orchard owner who has become frustrated with the unproductive tree...taking up space, wasting resources, and yielding no benefit or profit. Patience has run out after three years, and the tree should now be written off as a loss without further thought.

In contrast, the gardener recognizes an opportunity and potential for growth. There might be a reason that the tree has not flourished, and everything has not yet been tried to remediate the situation. Given more nourishment and support, there is a chance that the tree might come around and bear fruit.

How often have we looked at a situation – or even a person – as hopeless, without asking the question “Why is this so?” or taking the time to consider what is behind what we see or feel? Are systemic racism, gun violence, family discord, political division, poverty, or environmental destruction lost causes to be written off... or are we willing to give them the attention, energy, and consideration they deserve?

PRAYER

Loving God, give me the eyes and heart to see value, possibility, and hope in people and situations that I might otherwise consider not worth it. Grant me the strength and grace to act more justly and to give the benefit of the doubt to people, situations, and issues that I don't fully understand.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” Mahatma Gandhi

*Jim Boyd, CSJ Associate
Chicago, IL*



MONDAY - MARCH 21

SCRIPTURE

2 Kgs 5: 1-15

Ps 42: 2, 3; 43: 3-4

Lk 4: 24-30

REFLECTION

“As the deer longs for running streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.”

Ps. 42

In 2 Kings, Chapter 5, we learn that Naaman, the army commander, suffered from leprosy. His “dis-ease” sent him in a desperate search of a cure. Having sought help from the King of Israel to no avail, he was sent to the prophet Elisha, a man of God.

Naaman’s true beliefs were revealed when he was put out by the manner of healing prescribed by Elisha. “Go wash seven times in the Jordan” he was told. Can’t you just hear his disgust? “What? Go wash in the Jordan?” This is like saying: “What? No magic?” “I thought, at least, you would come out and ‘wave your hands over me,’ invoke God and cure me (instantly)!”

When I am in “dis-ease” to whom do I look? Do I have my eyes on the Living God, as Ps. 42 invites? Does my spirit lead me to long for God, the healer? When I experience the “dis-ease” around me in the environment, what change of heart and action will heal me and the world around me?

PRAYER

Draw me to your dwelling place, my Healer.
Send forth your light and fidelity that lead me on.
Inspire me to reflect your love to the people
and the world around me.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Offer peace from your heart to someone in need today.
Support a local social justice effort in your area.

*Bernadette Dean, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI*



TUESDAY - MARCH 22

SCRIPTURE

Dn 3: 25, 34-43

Ps 25: 4-9

Mt 18: 21-35

REFLECTION

*“Your paths are loving and sure, O Holy One,
And those who give witness to you through their lives
are blessed beyond measure.”*

Ps 25: 8-10

As I reflect on this passage, I am reminded of Jan Richardson’s blessing “Beloved Is Where We Begin.” She tells us that we should not enter into the wilderness without a blessing and “without hearing who you are: Beloved, named by the One who has traveled this path before you.” Each one of us is traveling a different path into the wilderness this Lent. Each one of us will hear echoing in our collective memory the challenges of the Lenten readings to rend our hearts and to find those places where God is calling us to encounter the divine in our brothers and sisters who travel the wilderness with us. Each one of us is called this holy season to change our hearts so we can be the light that reminds others that they, too, are Beloved of God. Our path this Lent may be filled with obstacles, but we will have the “strange graces” we need to bring comfort, healing, and forgiveness.

PRAYER

Open my heart, O God, to receive you.
Open my heart to be the light you call me to be.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each day I will try to remind another that they are Beloved of God.

*Mary Anne Hebert, CSJ
New Roads, LA*



WEDNESDAY - MARCH 23

SCRIPTURE

Dt 4: 1, 5-9

Ps 25: 4-9

Mt 18: 21-35

REFLECTION

“Make known to me your way, LORD; teach me your paths.”

Ps 25:4

Mercy and forgiveness are a theme of today’s readings. With open hearts and minds we ask God to teach us his ways. The psalmist asks God to “Remember no more the sins of my youth; remember me according to your mercy, because of your goodness, LORD.”

In the second reading we ask God’s mercy and forgiveness for ourselves. Then, in the Gospel Peter asks, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.”

We live in a world that fosters constant division among us on everything from vaccines, to masking, to healthcare for all, to climate change. How can we move toward a world in which we all understand we are all one? In today’s readings we are encouraged to both seek God’s mercy for ourselves and to see and relate to our dear neighbor with hearts filled with love and forgiveness.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the countless blessings you have bestowed upon me. Enliven my heart with gratitude and from this place of love and joy help me to see and relate to everyone, even those who offend me, with a heart filled with love and forgiveness.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each day when someone offends me, before reacting to the offense, I will stop, take a breath, and try to respond with love and forgiveness.

*Heather Alderman, CSJ Associate
La Grange, IL*



THURSDAY - MARCH 24

SCRIPTURE

Jer 7: 23-28

Ps 95: 1-2, 6-9

Lk 11: 14-23

REFLECTION

Thus, says the LORD: "This is what I commanded my people: Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper." Jer 7:23

*"O come, let us sing to the most High Creator of the Cosmos; let us make a joyful song to the Beloved! Let us come to the Radiant One with thanksgiving; with gratitude let us offer our psalms of praise!"
Ps 95:1-2 (from Nan C. Merrill Psalm for Praying)*

*"Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed."
Lk 11:14*

At first glance, today's readings might feel a bit like sandpaper... they kind of rub in all the wrong ways. But stay with them! God desires for us to prosper, and we have an active role to play in this extraordinary desire - we are called to listen for God's voice. Amidst the cacophony of noise clamoring within our ears and our inner being, that's easier said than done. What if I/we put the sandpaper to use to rid ourselves of any veneer layers acting as false armor? Allow God's desire for your life to set you free. God's love has such power! Power that allowed a man who was unable to speak to dazzle a crowd when his mouth was finally opened. I like to think this man sang joyfully to the Lord just as the psalmist instructed. What insight can you glean from today's readings that would allow you to more actively listen to the voice of God in your daily life? To sing joyfully? Expose the fleshy part of your heart and be prepared to be amazed.

PRAYER (from song by Marantha)

Change my heart, Oh God, make it ever true. Change my heart, Oh God. May I be like you. You are the potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me, this is what I pray. Change my heart, Oh God. Make it ever true. Change my heart, Oh God and may I be like you.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Ask God to change your heart of stone to a heart of flesh. Then be prepared to be amazed at what God will do in you.

*Paula Terese Pilon, CSJ
Cleveland, OH*

FRIDAY - MARCH 25

SCRIPTURE

Is 7: 10-14, 8: 10

Ps 40: 7-11

Heb 10: 4-10

Lk 1: 26-38

REFLECTION

"Hail, full of Grace! The Lord is with you."

Luke 1: 28

When this Gospel passage was proclaimed during Advent, I felt drawn to imaginatively consider Gabriel's experience of this conversation. Previously I only focused on what all this must have been for Mary. Though taken by surprise, she was able to give her complete yes to God. In my musing I imagined that Gabriel must have brought more to this encounter than simply offering Mary a polite greeting while giving her the message from God he was charged to deliver. Gabriel had come into the presence of an extraordinary ordinary human person. Might he have been wonderstruck at how closely the beat of Mary's heart was attuned to the heartbeat of God? What was it like for Gabriel to be present at the very moment of Incarnation? Within Mary, the God who created all that it is to be human, became intimately united with God-made human life. Humanity is now lifted up into the very life of God!

PRAYER

Loving God, I ask you for the grace to say yes to the ways you ask if you can live in and through me.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each day I will gratefully recall the wondrous ways your divinity is made manifest in my sisters and brothers and in all of Creation!

*Sue Torgersen, CSJ
Cottage Grove, MN*



SATURDAY – MARCH 26

SCRIPTURE

Hos 6: 1-6

Ps 51: 3-4, 18-21

Lk 18: 9-14

REFLECTION

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness; in your abundant compassion blot out my offense. Ps 51: 3

“O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” ...for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted. Lk 18: 14

It is no coincidence that the scripture passages for today follow the feast of the Annunciation.

Yesterday we heard a humble Mary give her “yes” to the angel’s request. Did Mary pray her own Serenity Prayer each day? Perhaps she substituted the word humility for serenity? Today we relive the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. In the first we see an expression of an excess of pride. From the latter we hear, “O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” The one who humbles himself will be exalted. Both Mary and the tax collector were very humble individuals. Each modeled for us the true face of humility and were exalted. In Psalm 51 the psalmist extends to each of us the plea of the tax collector. “Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness; in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.”

PRAYER

Beloved, please grant us the serenity (humility) to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

We rely on your mercy and abundant compassion each day.

May we in turn be a compassionate presence to our world.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

With a humble spirit respond generously to the Cry of the Poor.

With a humble spirit strive to address the Cry of Earth and end Global Warming.

*Rita Schmitz, CSI
St. Louis, MO.*



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - MARCH 27

SCRIPTURE

Jos 5: 9-12

Ps 34: 2-7

2 Cor 5: 17-21

Lk 15: 1-3, 11-32

REFLECTION

“My son,” said the Father, “you were always safe at home with me, and everything I had was yours as well as mine. But your brother, he was dead and now is alive! We must rejoice. We must have a feast, for I had lost him, and now I have found him again!” Lk: 15: 31-32

In today's gospel parable, we see a father's forgiveness and mercy toward a dutiful older son and a wayward younger one. The father's compassion moves him out of his house to bring them both home and to the table. Trying to lead good lives, we might find ourselves identifying more with the elder son. We connect with his resentment when we think we're not being appreciated, are jealous over someone's success, become angry at what we think is favoritism, or are sad at feeling excluded. Attitudes such as these can become destructive to ourselves and others. When feeding such feelings of resentment, we create a smallness of mind in our thoughts and a narrowness of heart in our actions. If we could see how that which upsets us in another is also within ourselves and own it, we can begin to know our oneness with the other. A crippled relationship can be brought to fuller life. Both sons were invited to the table. So, too, we should look to feed the goodness within ourselves, a goodness which God has placed in great deposit within us.

PRAYER

Your forgiveness and mercy, God, is relentless.

Go before me and guide me in your ways.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

This day, try to be attentive to opportunities for offering reconciliation and kindness to another.

*Bea Boyd, CSJ Associate
Chicago, IL*



MONDAY - MARCH 28

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 65: 17-21

Ps 30: 2-6, 11-13

Jn. 4: 43-54

REFLECTION

“Lo, I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth.”

Is 65: 17-18

In my reflection on these words in the past, I always thought of “the new earth” as one without war or poverty, where the goods of the earth would be equally distributed. And yes. . . that is still what I hope and pray this new earth might be someday in the future. But today, my focus more often shifts to what is happening to our earth here and now. . . to the lack of care, the destruction, the waste, to the real suffering to which I myself have contributed. Do I seriously consider the effect my life style choices may be having on the condition of our planet earth. . . things like driving distances for shopping or pleasure, use of food, water, gas, or electricity? So much of what is part of my daily living often contributes to some damage to our planet. How much more that promise of a new heaven and a new earth now means. Imagine clean water, a sky without smog or pollution where birds can fly freely, where animals and people can breathe clean fresh air. That would be “a new heaven and a new earth” which I myself could help to create depending on my daily life choices.

PRAYER

Loving God, open my mind, my heart, my hands. . . to know what I can do today that will bring about something new in my care for some part of this planet earth.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

What can I do or not do today that will show I really care about the suffering of our planet earth.

*Ann Terese Reznicek, CSJ
La Grange Park, IL*



TUESDAY - MARCH 29

SCRIPTURE

Ez 47: 1-9, 12

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

Jn 5:1-16

REFLECTION

“One person there had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus, who knew the person had been sick for a long time, said, do you want to be healed?” Jn 5: 5-6

In today’s reading, Jesus encounters a man who tries to enter a pool of healing waters close to the Temple. The man has been lame or paralyzed for thirty-eight years. The gospel tells us that Jesus saw him and knew him. Jesus’ question, “Do you want to be made well?” seems strange at first, especially to us who have lived with pandemic for so long. Of course, he does!

Jesus cures him immediately and slips away before the man can discover who he is. Only when Jesus encounters him a second time and tells him to sin no more does the paralytic truly come to “know” Jesus. Until that time, his physical transformation, no matter how miraculous, is incomplete. Until that time, he is not “well” in the full sense.

Today, Jesus asks us the same question. Do you want to be made well? Do you want to know and be known by Jesus? Only you can answer that question.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me to open myself to the power of your healing love.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

In my daily examen, I will be attentive to the ways that Jesus is present in the questions that I encounter this day.

*Mary Dacey, SSJ
Philadelphia, PA*



WEDNESDAY - MARCH 30

SCRIPTURE

Is 49: 8-15

Ps 145: 8-9, 13-14, 17-18

Jn 5: 17-30

REFLECTION

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes in the One who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

Jn 5:24

This reading from John’s gospel captured my attention because it began, “I tell you.” I ask myself. What is Jesus telling me? What is Jesus telling us? “Very truly” his words are quite clear. Jesus is telling me and us who he is and how he works for and with his Abba-Father. Their unity, in and through the Holy Spirit, is the great mystery of the love of God in the unity of the three persons. For you and me, grounded and formed in the charism of unifying love, this expression of unity is one that we know also. It should come as no surprise to us that God is working ‘greater works’ in us as God did through Jesus so that all are astonished! Consider for a moment our Congregation’s effort, one with the whole Church and other religious congregations, to advance the Seven Goals of Laudato Si Action Platform. In addition, take a moment to reflect on the many ways we are confronting expressions of racial injustice due to white privilege evident in the economic, social, environmental systems in our communities, neighborhoods, and country. As Jesus is one with his Abba-Father and does all in that oneness, so, too, do we. Moreover, in this way we, too, do not come under judgment, but pass from death to life.

PRAYER

Wisdom Jesus, risen and with us throughout the universe, deepen within us a more conscious awareness of our oneness with you and all creation. Let our choices and decisions advance the unity of all in joy and peace. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

As I walk through these Lent days, let me pause and become more mindful of God working through me as God did through Jesus.



Rita Ann Teichman, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI

THURSDAY - MARCH 31

SCRIPTURE

Ex 32: 7-14

Ps 106: 19-23

Jn 5: 31-47

REFLECTION

"If I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is not true...come to me to have life... seek the praise that comes from God."

Jn 5: 31, 40, 44

Interrogated...Scrutinized...Cross-questioned...What is the grace we ask from you today, Jesus, that we may continue to reveal who you are in our world?

Our world is in chaos and so divided... Many believe it's every person for themselves... Those who know and trust in you are seeking balance in a world that seems to be in a downward spiral. You have been revealed to us in different ways: through Moses, Scripture, John the Baptist, the Divine One, and...Yourself! Think about those we lost recently and reflect on the gifts they brought into the world: John Lewis, Betty White, Desmond Tutu, Hank Aaron, Capt. Tom Moore, Colin Powell, Prince Phillip, and many others who have touched our personal lives. A common thread...Faith, Hope and Love – not for themselves, but in the Divine and in the goodness of all.

Perhaps this is what is being revealed to us today as Jesus is interrogated, scrutinized and cross-questioned by those who put themselves and their beliefs first...

PRAYER

In times of chaos and division, give me the grace and courage to put you first. If I become angry, give me peace...If I become judgmental, give me acceptance...If I become arrogant, give me humility...If I become weak, give me courage...If I become doubtful, give me faith...If I become...

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

The world awaits your gift in chaotic times...Reach out to someone in Faith, Hope and/or Love in your endeavors today.

*Juli De Tarnowsky, CSJ
La Grange Park, IL*



FRIDAY – APRIL 1

SCRIPTURE

Wis 2: 1, 12-22

Ps 34: 17-23

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

REFLECTION

“ . . . the one who sent me is true” John 7: 28

To be known is a mysterious thing. As the gospel today indicates, to be known by another is powerful, challenging, and even dangerous. Jesus’ words to those in the temple, “you know me, and you know where I am from” are both a challenge to personally accept him and an invitation to hear and respond because the One who has sent Jesus is God.

The desire to recognize the truth of what is heard and the willingness to acknowledge what is being revealed are implicit in the call of every disciple. They demand that we let go of assumptions about what God’s “presence” should look and sound like, and instead, be open to the ways in which God’s wisdom and compassion actually do make themselves known in our world. They invite us to become our deepest, most authentic selves, called by God to help create the beloved community and to heal the suffering of Earth’s family.

PRAYER

Spirit of Wisdom, open the eyes of my heart to see clearly the ways in which you speak in our world today and the invitations that surround me to participate with you in bringing love to this fragile and beautiful world.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

When was I surprised by some experience of truth,
a new or fresh insight into the goodness of God
or a person who crossed my path today?

*Pat Kozak, CSJ
Cleveland, OH*



SATURDAY - APRIL 2

SCRIPTURE

Jer 11: 18-20

Ps 7: 2-3, 9-12

Jn 7: 40-53

REFLECTION

“Never before has anyone spoken like this one.”

Jn 7: 46

Earlier in this chapter we heard Jesus say “stop judging by appearances, but judge justly.”

Jesus had been teaching since the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles. The chief priests and Pharisees hear murmurings that this might be the Messiah. On the last and greatest day of the feast, the seventh day, Jesus continues to teach, which begins our reading.

Unlike Jeremiah, Jesus knows they are hatching plots against him. Guards in the crowd have been sent to arrest him. He knows he will be “A lamb led to slaughter... a tree to be cut off from the land of the living...”

Yet we see the guards returning empty handed and with hearts filled with amazement. The guards, who had been given an order to arrest him, return claiming they heard a superior order. The guards give witness to the WORD. Nicodemus invites us to “hear him” “find out what he is doing.”

Our reading ends with “Then each went to his own house.”

PRAYER

Jesus, Messiah, you call me to judge justly, not by appearance. Let me hear You, recognize what You have done, are doing.

Give me courage to witness, heart, mind, and soul.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

From your house, give witness to who Jesus is.

*Pat Warbritton, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI*



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - APRIL 3

SCRIPTURE

Is 43: 16-21

Ps 126: 1-6

Phil 3: 8-14

Jn 8: 1-11

REFLECTION

I am doing something new! Do you not perceive it?

Is 43:19

There is so much joy in the readings for this Sunday that I need to remind myself that it is the 5th Sunday of Lent. We are 12 days from Good Friday. One might expect the readings to be more somber. But never separate Good Friday from Easter Sunday. The days ahead will recount the suffering but there is a pulse of the positive throughout today's Scripture. Isaiah says, "I am doing something new! Do you not perceive it?" Throughout the psalm we are dreaming, laughing, and rejoicing because the Lord has done great things for us. Paul speaks for all of us when he says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection." Immortality appears to be the topic in the Gospel reading from John. Instead, it is a challenge between law and love. Jesus does not condemn. For teaching the way of forgiveness and compassion he will die, yet save us all.

PRAYER

Teach me your ways, O God, keep me on your path
of compassion instead of judgment.

Give me a kind heart ready to show mercy and care
for your people and all your creation.

Open the hearts of those around me to see the goodness
in every person. Amen

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Try to suspend judgment today on those political or church leaders
with whom you disagree.

*Marianne Race, CSJ
Brookfield, IL*



MONDAY - APRIL 4

SCRIPTURE

Dn 13: 1-9, 15-15, 19-30, 33-62

or

Dn 13: 41-62

Ps 23: 1-6

Jn 8: 12-20

REFLECTION

“O eternal God, you know what is hidden and are aware of all things before they come to be; you know they have testified falsely against me.”

Dn. 13, 41

“God stirred up the holy spirit of a young boy named Daniel.” Dn. 13, 44

“Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil for you are at my side.” Ps. 23.

“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life.” Jn 8, 12-13.

Susanna’s is an early “me-too” story. All seemed hopeless as two lecherous judges falsely accused her of adultery when she refused their lustful advances. The penalty was death. As she was led away, she cried out and God heard her cry. Young Daniel, stirred by the Holy Spirit, found the courage to speak and wisely interviewed the two men separately. Their differing testimonies proved their treachery. Susanna’s faith in a time of deep need, her heartfelt cry for God’s help, and Daniel’s “yes” to the Holy Spirit restored justice to all.

Psalm 23 reminds us that God is with us, even as we walk through darkness. May we, like Susanna, have trusting hearts and minds to cry for help. May we, like Daniel, be willing to follow the Holy Spirit in pursuit of justice. And may we, like the psalmist, fear no evil knowing that God will lead us.

PRAYER

Open my heart to your “light of life,” O Christ! Lift me out of any darkness that I may feel and guide me to your loving arms. I know that You are present even when I don’t feel it. I am so grateful.

Thank You.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Make it a practice to see and feel how Christ our Light shows up to you each day and speak about it.



*Betsy Meagher, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI*

TUESDAY - APRIL 5

SCRIPTURE

Nm 21: 4-9

Ps 102: 2-3, 16-21

Jn 8: 21-30

REFLECTION

*“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM...”
Jn 8:28*

Suicide? Really? Wow! Seems like an epic failure of communication happening between the poor confused Pharisees and Jesus. The Pharisees are bringing their present-day rigid and legalistic consciousness to Jesus who lives out of infinitely free and loving “Son of Man” Christ consciousness. The meaning behind words and phrases like “sin,” “belong to what is below...belong to what is above,” “believe that I AM” as Jesus uses them simply can’t register for the Pharisees; the two sides may as well be speaking different languages. Out of frustration or in surrender, the Pharisees finally ask Jesus, “Who are you?”

Refusing to shame or condemn the Pharisees, Jesus instead suggests something astonishing, “When you lift up the Son of Man...” Could Jesus be saying to these befuddled ones that they, too, can access and live out of Christ consciousness? And that if they do so, they can know themselves as “that I AM,” which is to say they, also, can live and proclaim all that “the Father” teaches, just as Jesus does?

What if we all understood that “sin” isn’t merely bad behavior, but the choice to deny or reject the Truth of who we are and the Life we’re meant to live? And that to “belong to what is above” is to know and be humbled by the I AM who indwells in every bit of creation, including every single human?

PRAYER

Infinite Freedom and Love, stir our hearts so that we begin to recognize and live consciously joined to the astonishing gift that is your indwelling I AM self-revelation.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Believe in endless possibility. Trust in unknowable potentiality.



*Barbara Foreman, CSJ Associate
La Grange, IL*

WEDNESDAY – APRIL 6

SCRIPTURE

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

Daniel 3: 52-56

Jn 8: 31-42

REFLECTION

*“And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
(John 8:32)*

On reading this familiar Gospel passage, I was struck by the insistence of the people in John 8:33 that, as descendants of Abraham, “we have never been slaves to anyone,” because it so obviously ignores the identity-forming narratives of enslavement in Egypt and subjugation in Babylon (vividly described in the scriptures from the book of Daniel).

But the temptation to forget is perennial. I think about the contemporary debates over how U.S. history is remembered and taught, particularly as it relates to our collective responsibility for the treatment of Native Americans and the enslavement of people of African descent. Like other Americans descended from European immigrants, I’m quite certain my factory-working ancestors never owned slaves—but that doesn’t mean they didn’t benefit from the racist attitudes and practices of their time.

Forgetting or willfully denying the painful truths of history—whether personal or collective—will not make them go away. Rather, in order to find healing and freedom for all, we must first confront the truth of these difficult and dangerous memories.

PRAYER

O God, give us open and humble hearts to know the truth of our history both as individuals and as a nation, that we might seek justice, healing, and freedom for future generations.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Commit to taking steps to learn the history of racial relations in the United States, perhaps through a book or documentary.

*Jessica Wroblewski, CSJ Associate
Cleveland, OH*



THURSDAY - APRIL 7

SCRIPTURE

Gn 17: 3-9

Ps 105: 4-9

Jn 8: 51-59

REFLECTION

“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I Am”

John 8: 58

Jesus was clear about who he was and his earthly mission. He was among creation to fulfil the promise given to Abraham in the first reading: that we were chosen among all of creation, and that God would provide a way for us to be fully united and live forever. Jesus, in his answer to his questioners, affirmed that He was God and the salvation of humanity, blessing us with eternal life if we lived as holy people chosen by God. Easy for us to accept, with full knowledge of the resurrection, but blasphemy to the crowd of skeptical Jews forced to listen to this man claiming “I Am.” Jesus spoke only Truth. We know that now and we can forgive the indignant response from those in the crowd, but it makes me wonder how I would have received Jesus back then.

Would I be a follower, or would I be looking for a stone?

PRAYER

Loving Creator, thank you for living among your creatures, showing us how to live in Love and fulfilling your promise to Abraham in Christ’s death and resurrection. Help me to live as I should, to be worthy of eternal life with you, a gift you give to all who believe.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each day I will remember God’s promise given to me through Abraham and fulfilled in Christ at Easter.

*Fran Gregory, CSJ Associate
Berwyn, IL*



FRIDAY - APRIL 8

SCRIPTURE

Jer 20: 10-13

Ps 18: 2-7

Jn 10: 31-42

REFLECTION

"...I have done many good works for you to see..."

Jn 10: 31-32

"...even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do..."

Jn 10: 38

It was winter, Jesus was in the temple responding to the Jews who were accusing him of blasphemy –of being only a man but claiming to be God. Jesus asserts that he is doing his Father’s work - to look to what he does – even if they don’t believe his words. The idea that one can argue with words, but that actions speak for themselves has been repeated in many ways through the centuries for a good reason. What we say and what we do – as individuals or as a group – are often contradictory. In this Lenten season of reflection, of looking inward and being honest about how our actions give flesh to our words, we might come up a little shame-faced: we say we believe ‘this’ but we really do ‘that.’ The works and actions of Jesus are those of love; we say we follow Jesus. Do we do things that come from love? That are prompted by love? How do we support the things we say we believe in – how do we show that our love for one another dictates our actions? Saying something is relatively easy, but living what we say can be a challenge. Those around us hear us, but they also see what we do – they are witnesses to our words and whether or not our actions or our words speak louder. Hearing Jesus say to look to what he does is a simple but sharp reminder for us to be true to our words.

PRAYER

May I have the strength to be honest when I say what is in my heart and then observe my actions. Let me be guided by the words of Jesus to look to what I do.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will look deeper at my behavior today – does it match my words?

*Sue Biskup, CSJ Associate
La Grange, IL*



SATURDAY - APRIL 9

SCRIPTURE

Ez. 37: 21-28

Jer. 31: 10-13

Jn. 11: 45-56

REFLECTION

"I will be their God and they shall be my people."

Ez. 37: 27

These are covenant words. At this point in the Book of Ezekiel, due to their infidelity, the people have been exiled to Babylon, the temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed, and all hope seems lost. But God, who is forever faithful, keeps the promise pledged long ago: God will gather them; God will dwell with them; God will establish peace.

I will be their God and they shall be my people.

In spite of our sins, infidelity, and disobedience, God longs to bring us together, to dwell in our midst, and to establish peace—if only we will nurture the relationship and allow God to be God for us.

I will be their God and they shall be my people when we are just in all of our actions, when we care for the environment and heal earth, when we forgive from our hearts, when we dialogue with people of divergent views, when we become Christ to one another.

PRAYER

God of the promise, grant us the grace to be faithful
and obedient to your will.

May we open our minds and hearts to realize
how much you love us.

Inspire us to be just, caring, healing, forgiving,
and open to your call.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Hear God say and believe, "You are mine!"

*Janice Grochowsky, CSJ
Dodge City, KS*



PALM SUNDAY - APRIL 10

SCRIPTURE

Is 50: 4-7

Ps 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24

Phil 2: 6-11

Lk 22: 14-23: 56

REFLECTION

Scripture scholars tell us that the passion/death/ resurrection story of Jesus was the centerpiece of the gospels. If this is so, then the Palm Sunday story is the beginning of “the heart” of the gospel.

Think of Palm Sunday as full of praise and promise and possibility.

“The whole multitude of his disciples” were spreading their cloaks on the road as he passed... waving palm branches “praising God with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen...” at the hands of this wonderful man. (Luke 19:37)

Perhaps this was a day when Jesus knew that in his very person “heaven was wedded to Earth, and all was reconciled with God.” Daniel Berrigan says that Jesus “wore the world for wedding band.” Jesus celebrates his union with all creation, and the crowds join in this acclamation.

Stay with the joy, the triumph, the celebration we hear in this story of Jesus’ jubilant entrance into Jerusalem. All too soon we will have to move on, but for now, STAY!

PRAYER

We walk the way of the cross with you, Jesus, and carry in our hearts the suffering of people in our world. We know that we live the paschal mystery—passion, death, and resurrection—again, and again in our lives. We long for Easter morning. As your disciples, we want to offer our world the consolation we hardly dare believe.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Jesus knows our human life because he shares it. He wears our world for wedding band--and invites us to do the same.

*Jeanne Cmolik, CSJ
Cleveland, OH*



MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK - APRIL 11

SCRIPTURE

IS 42: 1-7

PS 27: 1-3, 13-14

JN 12: 1-11

REFLECTION

“Put your hope in God, be strong, let your heart be bold.” Ps 27: 14

Today Isaiah speaks of the servant of Yahweh. Who is this servant and what is he like? A human, chosen and set apart to be God’s witness. He is filled with God’s spirit from his mother’s womb, a disciple of God. He performs tasks gently and without display, and at times even appears to fail. These tasks are to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison and those who live in darkness. He accepts outrage and contempt; he does not succumb because God sustains him.

I have come to realize that Jesus’ life is God’s vision of what we as humans are called to be, as we too are filled with God’s spirit. This gentle, humble acceptance of all realities with a loving heart is the Kingdom of God, which transforms our lives and brings about a just and loving world. Love enables us to do God’s will in reaching out to those most in need of healing and forgiveness.

In today’s gospel we see Jesus’ gentleness when he accepts Mary’s care and love for him by washing his feet, just six days before his death. We see his acceptance of his coming death in his response to Mary and Judas, telling Judas to leave Mary alone; she had to keep this perfume for the day of his burial.

PRAYER

Jesus, knowing myself to be your disciple and filled with God’s spirit, keep me centered on your humble and loving presence in my life. Enable me to carry the tasks that you most ask of me; seeing you in others without distinction and accepting all with a loving heart.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

During my examen of conscience at night I will reflect on my attitude toward the events of the day to see if they have been loving and accepting.

*Frances Duos, CSJ
New Orleans, LA*



TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK - APRIL 12

SCRIPTURE

Is 49: 1-6

Ps 71: 1-6, 15, 17

Jn 13: 21-33, 36-38

REFLECTION

The Lord called me... though I thought I had toiled in vain, my recompense is with my God. God says, "It is too little for you to be my servant... I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

Is 49:1b, 4, 6

God's picture is much bigger than mine! This passage, often interpreted in reference to Jesus, applies to us as well. God takes our efforts at loving and serving and transforms them. Jesus seems to fail, yet he trusts in God's call and perseveres. He is violently rejected, but his ministry has effect. Because of his presence, the anawim know God's love. Jesus also ministers to those wielding influence, though they are unable to accept his way.

(I like to think, though, that salvation may reach even one such as Pilate, who is cautiously curious about Jesus.) Like Jesus, we, too, serve a hurting world in which we ourselves are participants. Our efforts may end in apparent failure. When God calls us simply to be servants, that is enough (see Lk 17:10). But in God's bigger picture, in God's generosity and honor, God may make us humbly "light to the nations," that God's salvation may reach the ends of the earth!

PRAYER

Adapted from the Maxims of Perfection 2:7

Living and dying in you, dear Jesus, I make my own your beautiful intentions: the glory of God and the salvation and sanctification of humankind and our world; in a word, the whole purpose for which you chose to live and die.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will not give up. I hold on to hope! I am light.

*Theresa Pitruzzello, CSJ
New Orleans, LA*



WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK - APRIL 13

SCRIPTURE

Is 50:4-9

Ps 69:8, 21-22; 31-34

Mt 26:14-25

REFLECTION

*“Not I, Rabbi, surely?” “They are your own words,” answered Jesus.
Mt 26:25-26*

I ponder the betrayal of Judas. How could he have turned his beloved master in to the authorities for torture and death? Did Judas not realize the consequences of his actions? What was Jesus thinking and feeling?

Did Judas not know how much I loved him? I called him by name to be my disciple and to walk with me on the path of healing and preaching the good news of God’s love. I trusted him.

Judas betrayed Jesus. He justified his actions for unknown reasons. Judas says “Not I, Rabbi surely?” Jesus responds “They are your own words.” Judas, you know down deep what you are doing.

I can relate to the encounter of Judas and Jesus. I turn away from Jesus’ trust and justify my own actions out of fear or greed. What does Jesus say? I know you. I called you by name. Stay with me for our Father will not abandon us. Trust me.

PRAYER

My beloved God, please forgive me for not trusting in your love. Help me to mend my personal brokenness so that I may tend to the needs of creation and all others.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

God, I place my life in your hands. I recognize your steadfast love. I will repeat the mantra, “I trust in your mercy.”

*Margaret Guzzardo, CSJ
St. Louis, MO*



THURSDAY OF HOLY WEEK - APRIL 14

SCRIPTURE

Ex 12: 1-8, 11-14

Ps 116: 12-13, 15-18

1 Cor 11: 23-26

Jn 13: 1-15

REFLECTION

*“Our blessing cup is a communion in the blood of Christ...
Do this in remembrance of me.”*

Psalm 116 and John 13

Our blessing cup, the blood, sweat, and tears of our lives poured out for others, is a Eucharistic sharing in communion with the blood of Christ. It is a profound expression of our relationship with him. Whenever we stand in solidarity with the immigrant, refugee, or those on death row, we are in communion with Christ. Whenever we speak up for the oppressed, those on the margins of society, the voiceless of our desecrated planet, we give witness to Jesus’ mandate to “do this in remembrance of me.” And whenever we take actions to restore the inherent dignity of someone or promote equity for all, we proclaim our communion with the blood of Christ. Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” and through these actions manifested in our living, loving, and works of justice, we do just that. The Jesus of Holy Thursday begs for our commitment to unite the blessing cup of our lives with the blessing cup of Christ’s life poured out in love for all.

PRAYER

Love of Christ Outpoured, fill the blessing cup of my life! Grant me a generous spirit that I may pour out rich blessings of compassion, justice, and healing upon my family, community, neighborhood, world, and planet. Unite my heart with yours so that all I am and do may be in remembrance of you.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will ask for the grace each day to know how I’m being invited to pour out my life for others. Each night I will ask God to show me how I’ve done this.



*Kathy Sherman, CSJ
Westchester, IL*

GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 15

SCRIPTURE

Is 52: 13-53:12

Ps 31: 2, 6, 12-17, 25

Heb 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9

Jn 18: 1-19:42

REFLECTION

*“Into your hands I commend my spirit,
You will redeem me, O faithful God.” Ps 31:6*

The only inherently “good” thing about this Friday is that God never left the scene of the crime. Jesus’ tortuous execution—aided and abetted by betrayal and lie after lie—has no redeeming quality in and of itself. The reason that we cannot do evil to bring about good is that God would never do such a thing. Yes, God was fully present that dark day, never as instigator, but in radical, suffering solidarity with Jesus. We know this because of Easter. Jesus knew God’s fidelity by heart, and witnessed God’s presence in the women and Beloved Disciple who stayed by his side.

Theologian Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ writes that we must never view the cross in isolation. “But take the cross in relation to the ministry of the one who was crucified and raised from the dead: the whole event inscribes into history the powerful love of God who is with creatures in their agony, bent on redeeming the world.” (Creation and the Cross, 111-112.)

So, our liturgical entrance into this day is apt: gathering in somber silence and dropping prostrate before the unspeakable tragedy of the just and beautiful put to death. And when we rise to meet the cross with our touch or kiss or bow, may our experience be of reverencing the One bent on accompanying all who suffer life-threatening injustices, and find ourselves beloved disciples in promising the same.

PRAYER

God of Life, help me today to know how to accompany and advocate for those who suffer injustice.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Make this prayer tangible every day, by word and action.



Mary Jo Curtsinger, CSJ
Chicago, IL

HOLY SATURDAY - APRIL 16 - THE EASTER VIGIL

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:1-2	Psalm 104
Genesis 22:1-18	Psalm 16
Exodus 14:15-15:1	Exodus 15
Isaiah 54:5-14	Psalm 30
Isaiah 55:1-11	Isaiah 12
Baruch 3:9-15-4:4	Psalm 19
Romans 6:3-11	Psalm 118
Luke 24:1-12	

REFLECTION

Then God said: "Let there be light." And, there was light. (Genesis 1:3)

ALLELUIA! This is the great vigil of Easter! In the early Church, it was an all-night event of praising God and recalling all that God has done from creation to the new creation in the risen Christ. The great theme is always: from darkness to light. The seven readings at the beginning of the liturgy recount the saving acts of God, with the climax in the Gospel, proclaiming the saving act of Christ's resurrection. . .and our own. From the very act of creation, God ALWAYS calls forth light from the midst of darkness. God's saving acts are recounted through the history of ancient Israel: saving Isaac from being sacrificed by Abraham, saving the Israelites from slavery through the Exodus account, being present and engaged with them through the Exile, providing water to the thirsty. And finally, we hear Luke's account of the empty tomb, the resurrection of Christ: light from darkness, life from death. Indeed, God creates light in every darkness, if we have hearts to believe! ALLELUIA!

PRAYER

"Longing for light, we wait in darkness, longing for truth, we turn to you. Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see: Christ, be our Light, shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness!
Christ be our light, shine in your Church gathered today."

"Christ Be Our Light" by Bernadette Farrell

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will notice the "points of light" in my life today, and pray that God's light will shine through my life, enlightening the darkness that might be around me, enlightening the darkness in our world.



*Sallie Latkovich, CSJ
Chicago, IL*

EASTER SUNDAY - APRIL 17

SCRIPTURE

Acts 10; 34; 37-43;
Ps 118: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23;
Col 3: 1-4 or Cor 5: 6-8
Jn 20: 1-9

REFLECTION

On this mysterious and blessed day we read of Mary of Magdala's discovery of the empty tomb. Peter and the beloved disciple run to explore, see the burial shroud, and depart wondering: "For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead." And we wonder as well. On Tuesday we will learn of Mary's joyous encounter with the risen Jesus. Is this sequence of events not true of all believers? We experience the emptiness of the tomb, and we wonder. We must await our own encounter with the risen One to begin to understand. Here is a prayer poem about my own journey.

PRAYER

Resurrection

I rest in you, assured of such a constant love,
knowing in truth that I know it not.
Clear soul'd silence dwells here and
I am recreated in freshening peace.
You ask only an open heart and a standing still, so still.
I do not understand, of course, sensing only dimly
such bright mystery suffusing our universe.
My faith in resurrection
does not rest outside, you see,
but within.
Because of this grand communioneering,
I know God lives
... and so do I.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

How do you experience Resurrection?

*Christine Schenk, CSJ
Cleveland, OH*



THOUGHTS & MUSINGS



THOUGHTS & MUSINGS





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