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*Spread God's Love
and Compassion*

St. Michael Lenten Prayer 2024

Forgiving God,
You reach out with Your peace,
inviting us to Spread Your Love and Compassion.
You understand our sinful human nature,
and You love us anyway.
Scatter the clouds and shadows
that obstruct Your faithful presence,
and help us to listen for Your Word.
As we work to become better people,
open our hearts to know Your Beloved Son,
and to listen for Your Holy Spirit,
because when You are for us,
who can be against?
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



We are beginning our Lenten journey. On Ash Wednesday we begin the Holy Season of Lent. We are marked, or signed with ashes to remind us of who we are, sinners, and like the barren branches outside, we anticipate the coming Spring—the coming of new life.

Lent is a time to acknowledge our need for repentance and turning back to the Lord. Lent is not just a time to “give up” something, but a time of decision—deciding for conversion and returning to God. During Lent we are called to purify ourselves through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the traditional disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

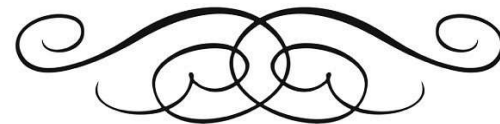
Lent is also a time of action: our theme for Lent is *“Spread God’s Love and Compassion.”* As disciples we are to be the face of Christ to others. Lent gives us a perfect opportunity to, by our actions and almsgiving, spread God’s love and compassion.

I invite you to take a few moments each day— read the scripture readings and the reflections prepared for you by your fellow parishioners at St. Michael. Open your mind and heart to the gentle whisper of God’s voice. God is speaking—let us take the time to listen.

I pray that you will make the most of these forty days. May this be a time of conversion and change, and may you be ready to celebrate with other believers, the Glory of the Risen Christ. May we rise from the ashes of sin and come alive with the fire of faith given to us at Pentecost!

In Christ’s love,

Fr. Frank A. Kurucz
Pastor



"At Easter, God finally reveals His glory: He takes away the last veil and astonishes us as never before. We discover, in fact, that God's glory is all love: pure love, mad and unthinkable, beyond every limit and measure. . .

"True glory is the glory of love, because it is the only one that gives life to the world.

Certainly this glory is the opposite of worldly glory, which comes when one is admired, praised or acclaimed. The glory of God, on the other hand, is paradoxical: no applause, no audience. At the center is not the ego, but the other."

-Pope Francis, Angelus, April 2019

Ash Wednesday February 14, 2024

Joel 2: 12-18 2 Corinthians 5: 20—6:2 Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Is it Ash Wednesday already? Time flies when you're having fun. Thinking of Lent, and then Good Friday it may seem wrong to include the word "fun." As one of our first grade Religious Education students said, "Good Friday...What's good about it! How can you say it's good when Jesus suffered so much and died!"

During Lent we fast, give alms, pray, offering it all to and for God. We are not doing it for others to see or to draw attention to ourselves. Another young person inspired me as he reminded his mother, "Do we need to share about everything we do with everyone?"

Hopefully that mom was sharing her joy of giving, and planting some seeds within others who are trying to decide how they can help someone. The Gospel tells us not to look gloomy as we fast. We don't need to be gloomy as we sacrifice, give alms, and work to help others. Each Saturday morning, a group picks up food from Trader Joe's and gathers at St. Michael to sort and bag food to be given to hungry families. It is work, and it's fun, too. As we serve together we talk and laugh, all with and for our Lord.

Jesus did suffer greatly and he also experienced great joy. This Lent we can do the same.

**Kelly Martinez,
Saturday morning Food Sorting Ministry
To support the mission of "Pro Labore Dei— Feed My Lambs"**

**Thursday after Ash Wednesday
February 15, 2023**

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20 Luke 9: 22-25

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

It's only the second day of our Lenten journey. We awake with yesterday's ashes scrubbed from our foreheads, but, nonetheless, feeling secure. Today's scripture reminds us that Jesus' suffering, horrific death and resurrection is our salvation. Reading this we are grateful, comforted and perhaps even relieved. Jesus did the work for us. The gospel is, indeed, good news!

But wait. We also read that *"whoever wishes to save his life must lose it."* Um, what? I must lose my life for Christ in order to save it? Suddenly confidence and comfort in the journey before us becomes more realistic, more challenging.

We all want salvation and eternal happiness but are we willing to do the hard stuff to get there? The answer differs for each of us. Jesus tells us today that our lives are not about getting, but rather about giving. Not about what costs us less, but about what is the right thing, no matter the cost. Not about the minimum we need to do for the sake of others, but about giving all we have.

We are challenged today to understand that this forty day journey, indeed, the journey of our lives, is not just about giving up chocolate.

**Judy Dain
Lector**



Friday after Ash Wednesday February 16, 2024

Isaiah 58: 1-9a

Matthew 9: 14-15

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

Why do we take on fasting during Lent? What does God want me to understand about it so that it becomes meaningful and makes a difference in my own spiritual life? I remember when those of a certain age were required to fast throughout the 40 days of Lent to prepare ourselves for the gift of Jesus' Death and Resurrection. Although this is no longer the case, except for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, I try to fast on Fridays, when no meat is eaten, to remember Christ's sacrifice for us, and on other selected days of the week. However, the most important aspect of fasting is for me to be mindful, making this a physical and spiritual prayer. I still like ice cream in winter, so I give that up, but I add works of mercy. In our family, this message rings clear when we prepare and then eat our blessed Polish Food Basket on Easter Morning.



**Donna Boddy
Apologetics Ministry**

Saturday after Ash Wednesday
February 17, 2024

Isaiah 58: 9b-14

Luke 5: 27-32

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.

Today's readings remind us of the simplicity of God's wishes for us. When God outlined his wants in Isaiah, he asked for simple things: love and concern for others, a lack of violence and hate. When Christ ate with Levi and the tax collectors, he made it clear that he is always there to help those who need guidance if they only ask for it. We are the ones who over-complicate things and forget that God is love. Every single request he makes is only made to spread and strengthen that love.

It only takes a quick glance around to see the chaos that the world is succumbing to. The truth that I have realized through my faith is that God is the only one who can bring and maintain peace. This year I believe we need to put as much emphasis as we can on God's ways and not our ways. If any of us realize we have been falling behind or even doing the opposite, we only need to let him into our hearts. It is always better for us to admit and start our repentance than to continue making the same mistake. Once we do that, our lives will become infinitely easier. This is the way we should start our year as we focus on the resurrection.

Ramsey Bauer
Parishioner

First Sunday of Lent February 18, 2024

Genesis 9: 8-15 1 Peter 3: 18-22 Mark 1: 12-15

Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

In today's readings we are reminded of the immense love God has for us. He reminds us at all times, but we, at times, don't seem to remember as we get preoccupied with our daily tasks. He even took a further step to remind us, with a beautiful rainbow. Let us rejoice when we see a rainbow and ask ourselves, what have I done to praise the Lord lately? Why does he have to remind us of his love for us? It should be carved into our hearts!

As we start this Lenten Season, let's come closer to our Lord and Savior, and carve into our hearts how precious we are to him. Let us never forget and always give him thanksgiving. Let your baptism be your strength for the next 40 days and always fast, give alms, and pray intentionally.

As Jesus went out to the dessert for 40 days and was tempted by Satan, you, too, will be tempted by Satan and the worldly distractions (these are our wild beasts). Don't lose focus on the cross; let it be always a reminder that he died for YOU. His great love for YOU will never cease. Pick up your cross and follow him to show him how much you love him for his sacrifice for humanity.

“This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

-Mark 1: 15

**Maria Villasenor
Catechist**

Monday of the First Week of Lent

February 19, 2024

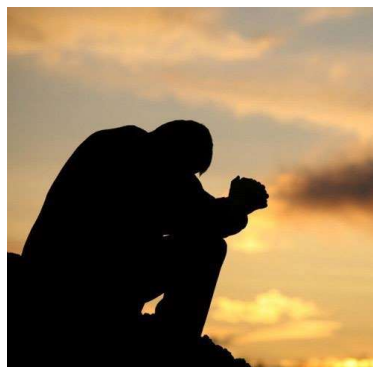
Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18 Matthew 25: 31-46

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The coincidence of timing and my assigned scriptures weigh heavy on me tonight as I write this. Earlier today, I was pulling away from a grocery store when a man crossing the parking lot flagged me down. He proceeded to tell me his family was in a hotel room and needed food and asked if I could help him. I felt caught off guard, sitting there halfway backed out of my parking spot and stopped in the middle of the lot. I didn't know if I could trust him, or what to do. I panicked, said I couldn't help him and God Bless him and drove away. But I felt awful. I literally imagined that I had just told Jesus I couldn't help him when I knew very well that I could have. I used to have blessing bags in my car for situations like this, but I handed them out and never replaced them. I spent the rest of the day praying for forgiveness, and to be a better Christian.

I had read my scripture assignments when I first received them a month ago, but had long forgotten what they were. Imagine my surprise, then horror, guilt, and shame, when I sat down to read them again tonight.

I know our Lord is a forgiving Lord. I pray he forgives me and gives me another chance to be one of his sheep.



Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

February 20, 2024

Isaiah 55: 10-11

Matthew 6: 7-15

From all their distress God rescues the just.

In Isaiah we hear Isaiah talking about God's word having an impact on our actions. He compares God's word and its transformational impact to that of rain and snow. Just as rain and snow, or water is essential to all life on Earth, transforming the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, so does God's word provide us with the guidance we need to live productive lives. Lives that will ensure we do God's will on Earth.

I think the gospel of Matthew is a good segue from the first reading by Isaiah. Isaiah speaks of God's word driving his will. In the gospel Jesus tells his disciples to not pray like the pagans, because God knows what we need without our asking. Instead, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, and to pray to God the Father, reiterating the message of God's will being done on Earth, and God providing for our sustenance. But most importantly, we need to forgive others just as we seek God's forgiveness for ourselves. He then adds that if we don't forgive our fellow men, God will not forgive us. A powerful message in today's world where it seems that no transgression can be forgiven or go unpunished!



Hank Veith
Former Parishioner

Wednesday of the First Week of Lent February 21, 2024

Jonah 3: 1-10

Luke 11: 29-32

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

During the time of Lent we have lots of time to reflect on ourselves and think about how we can strengthen our relationship with God and our faith. Just like the Ninevites, we can all do things to turn away from sin, such as taking a few minutes a day to read the Bible or pray. We can also sacrifice some of our comforts for Lent, like the king of Nineveh, giving up his royal robes, and instead of sitting on his throne, he gave it up to sit on the ground.

In today's society we all tend to do things we like and are fun to us, but many of us forget about our faith and connection to God. Many people now would rather party and spend time with friends than go to church or help others. In Luke 11: 29-32, Jesus proclaims, "*The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn I, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.*" If we just spend some of our time devoting ourselves to God, we, too, can be like Ninevites and live in God's eternal kingdom.



Nick Barrett
Quest Council Member

Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle
Thursday - 1st Week of Lent
February 22, 2024

1 Peter 5: 1-4

Matthew 16: 13-19

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

“But who do you say that I am?” The Son of God! This Jesus who walks through the villages and towns is the Son of God! In so many ways he seems just like the rest of us—celebrates weddings, weeps at the death of his friend, attends synagogue. But all of those miracles—the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear!

Simon Peter said *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* He was inspired to see that Jesus was not just some ‘miracle worker,’ but so much more! How does that change things? What obligations does that present to us, his followers? We can’t pretend that it doesn’t make a difference in our lives. Peter and the other Apostles were filled with a burning desire to tell the world all about Jesus. They left their homes and traveled throughout the world to tell as many people as they could about Jesus.

Do I have that burning desire to let the world know about Jesus? Have I inspired others to come to Jesus to find a better spiritual life? Jesus told Peter he was the rock foundation of his church. What do I need to do to be one of the bricks that builds up his church?

Peggy Mraz
Lector



Friday of the First Week of Lent February 23, 2023

Ezekiel 18: 21-28

Matthew 5: 20-26

If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?



Almost all of the commandments refer to our interaction with our fellow brothers and sisters. Because we are all human, we will all sin during our lifetime on earth. If our sin is against one of our brothers or sisters, it is imperative that we try to reconcile that sin with him or her before we ask our heavenly father for his forgiveness. We all know that he is all forgiving.

Bob Swanson
Parishioner

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

February 24, 2024

Deuteronomy 26: 16-19

Matthew 5: 43-48

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

We were asked to listen with an open mind and heart as someone read today's gospel aloud to us. The first time, we listened. The second time, as we listened, we each reflected on the message as it related to something that has already happened, is happening, or could happen in our life in different situations. Three things we have heard many times came to mind; "What does God want me to do?", "Love God and your neighbor," and "We must forgive."

There are many different people in this world, and God created all of them. He loves them, and we should try to love them, too. Sometimes, that's hard, and sometimes that's really hard. People can really get on your nerves. We don't always like everyone. We don't always like what they do to us, how they treat us. What should we do in those situations?

God guides us to do good instead of bad to others so we do not sin. We can resolve problems in a better way. We can always, "be the better person." Jesus gives peace and forgives; we should too. We need to pray for everyone, even the ones whom you don't like, that are mean, and hurt you. When you pray for someone you will have better thoughts and feelings about them.

**A collaborative reflection from some of the
Religious Education Confirmation Candidates**

Second Sunday of Lent

February 25, 2024

Genesis 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18 Romans 8: 31b-34 Mark 9: 2-10

I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

This is a tough one! Jesus recruited the Apostles, and then asked them to work tirelessly to advance his message. Flash forward, Jesus invites his trusted sidekicks (Peter, James, and John) to experience the Transfiguration. But then, as the group comes down the mountain, jaws dropped, Jesus says, “please don’t tell anyone about that terrific event until I’m gone.” What the heck? If I were Peter I’d have been frustrated by the direction to protect this secret.

Two sentiments from the other readings that help rationalize this direction are:

- if God is for us, who can be against us?
- all this because you obeyed my command.

There is plenty in our Catholic faith for us to wrestle with but during this season of preparation, knowing that we benefit from the strength and vision of God as our ally warms my heart and inspires confidence. Similar to the sentiment of the St. Patrick Breastplate Prayer, God is with us!

Even when, or especially when, the path is not totally clear to us. Our responsibility is to practice our faith well and celebrate the joy and promise of heaven through our relationship with God. So, through confusing days and experiences that leave us awestruck, ones when we feel alone and ones when the promise of Jesus’ friendship is clear, know that we are re- ally well-positioned in the grace of God!

Adam and Jill Wojcik
St. Michael School Family

Monday of the Second Week of Lent February 26, 2024

Daniel 9: 4b-10 Luke 6: 36-38

Lord, do not deal with us according to our sins.

We see Daniel praying to God, confessing the sins of his people and seeking forgiveness. This passage reminds us of the importance of repentance and turning to God during the season of Lent. Daniel sees the sins of people and them not being able to follow God's commandments. It's a time for us to reflect on our own shortcomings, seek forgiveness, and to strengthen our relationship with God.

Moving on to Luke, Jesus teaches us about the importance of showing mercy and forgiveness to others. Lent is a time for us to not only seek forgiveness for ourselves, but also to forgive others for their wrongdoing. By being generous, forgiving, and compassionate, we align ourselves with the teachings of Jesus and demonstrate the love of God to others.

During Lent we are called to examine our hearts, repent, and seek forgiveness. It is a time of spiritual reflections, and we can't forget about just giving something up during that time. It should be focused on strengthening our connection to God.

Both passages show us how to run away from sin and seek out God's compassion. We should then extend his love and forgiveness to others.

Zachary Barrett

Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

February 27, 2024

Isaiah 1: 10, 16-20 Matthew 23: 1-12

To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

As I reflected on today's readings, I recognized a similarity between Jesus' teachings and a value that I try to instill in my own children, Integrity. I tell them that a simple way of thinking about having integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is looking. It's very easy to do good things and behave when you are being watched and recognized. The challenge is to do the right thing when you are the only one who knows. I often think people's hearts are in the right place, but sometimes pride gets in the way. People get consumed with the recognition and lose sight of what is important, and that is to remain humble in all that we do. Let God take all the credit because without him we would not have these values to teach.



Scott Mitchell
St. Michael School Parent

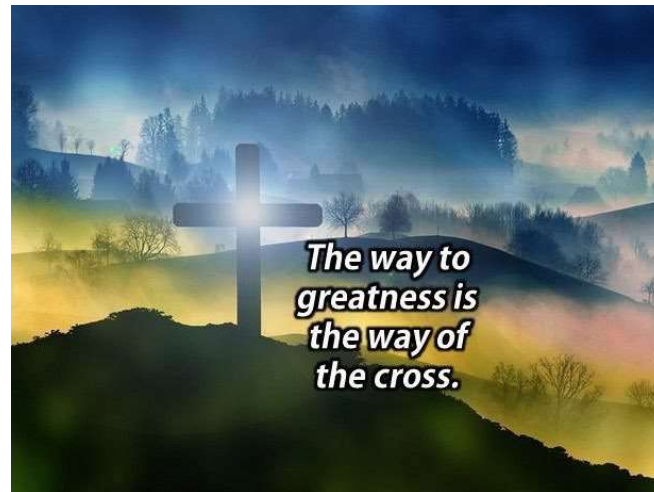
Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent February 28, 2024

Jeremiah 18: 18-20

Matthew 20: 17-28

Save me O Lord, in your kindness.

As I read today's gospel I reflected on two words, rulers and servants, and how we use the power or authority we have. In life we tend to see those who use power to rule and those who use power to serve. As I reflected on my own interactions with power, I thought of the power I have in the everyday decisions I make. From interactions with a salesclerk, to raising my children, to simply being a good friend. We hold power in our decisions and if we use those decisions to serve the world around us we can't go wrong.



Janel Velasquez
St. Michael School Parent

Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

February 29, 2024

Jeremiah 17: 5-10

Luke 16: 19-31

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.



In the first reading from Jeremiah, it seems to say that people who put their trust and faith in other human beings are being misled. If we put our trust in God, good things will happen. For me, this also suggests the phrase: Let Go, Let God. If the human heart can be deceitful, I think that sometimes our feelings can mislead us, so we definitely want to keep God at the helm of our ship on Earth.

The rich man in the gospel did not learn from the prophets before him, and made wrong decisions with his wealth. We are told through the prophets and Jesus on how to live, and we only get one chance to do it right. There will be no do-overs or more warnings. So, use your life to do the right thing.

Lori Scala
Parishioner

Friday of the Second Week of Lent March 1, 2024

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

Remember the marvels the Lord has done.

This week's readings have an overarching theme of rejection. When I think of rejection, words such as "isolated" and "dismissed" immediately come to mind. These words, at their core, all have a negative connotation, but I think these readings allow us to view rejection with a different mindset. Jesus was rejected. He was rejected by his community and even his friends and, ultimately, was killed because of it. He suffered and sacrificed. Why? So that we can be saved. His rejection leads to our forgiveness.

Every one of us has felt rejected in our lives. Maybe we didn't get that job, or we feel rejected for our beliefs, but these moments help shape us and guide us. This week's readings are a reminder for me that God has a plan and if we follow him and act in his word, the rejection we feel at times will eventually lead to something more fulfilling. It may open doors we didn't know existed. We simply have to trust that he will guide us along the way, and the rejection is only temporary.



Nicole Germino
Youth Ministry

Saturday of the Second Week of Lent March 2, 2024

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

The Lord is kind and merciful.

The readings today all emphasize one simple idea: God's unconditional love for all. How are young or old, church-goers or people who stay at home, are all welcomed by him? God is willing to give us all a chance at a life with him.

As a teenager, it is so relieving to read scriptures that remind me of this idea. Sundays when I sleep in, or days I miss out on going to my Quest meetings to connect with God and friends, have me feeling guilty in my mistakes or choices. But, I am reminded that God is forgiving, that it is hard to be perfect, impossible, really. And even in our imperfections God will continue to love us and attempt to lead us in the right path of life.

These readings today remind me that God will celebrate my presence in his church, no matter what I do, as long as I am willing to seek him out and accept his love that he gives so freely.



**Third Sunday of Lent
Year B
March 3, 2024**

Exodus 20: 1-17 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25 John 2: 13-25

Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The contradictory nature between our first reading and the gospel are so stark to me. Firstly, we are being given the Commandments; being told how to treat God, our neighbors, and the loved ones with utmost care and respect. Then, in the gospel, we hear of Jesus becoming enraged at the desecration of his Father's temple.

A few years ago I was blessed to be a part of a new graduate program at the University of Notre Dame. The program took us across the country over the course of two years to observe, interact, and explore a variety of Catholic, Christian, and charter schools. Our professor invoked the Gospel of John often in that time to open our eyes to the dichotomy of actions we sometimes take in life. There are times when making a strong show of emotion is necessary to motivate.

Zeal is another term we used often, and admittedly a word that I had not heard used too often before then. When I was younger I always saw Jesus' reaction in the temple as uncontrolled anger and rage toward the vendors, but this course helped me to realize that, in fact, Jesus was showing a zeal for the sacredness of his Father's temple. He had a burning passion for God, and therefore, he used his outburst to convey that message, very clearly, to those around him.

**Paul Smith
St. Michael School Principal**

Monday of the Third Week of Lent

March 4, 2024

2 Kings 5: 1-15ab

Luke 4: 24-30

Thirst is my soul for the living God.

Considering the reading I think we need to give God our weaknesses and follow his plan, not our own. There are so many illnesses, such as leprosy, in Naaman's experience, but everyone struggles with something. My world was turned upside down when I was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer last year as a young mother/wife with 2 children. There are so many challenges in life, and I chose how to live my life. I choose daily not to struggle with things that are out of my control, and to focus on what I do have the power to change. I believe that prayer, not only from myself but from family, friends, and our parish, saved my life as the cancer receded.

God is listening. Offer your struggles to him. It's not easy all the time, but have faith! Naaman was also hesitant to comply because he was asked to do something he didn't expect. It was too simple. God can do great things by simple means. Life does not follow our expectations. My life has certainly not taken the path that I expected, but I do believe it is God's plan. There are so many people I have met and experiences I have had that I would not have without this life trajectory. All we have is today. Sometimes it's the most simple things that make an incalculable difference, and I believe God is behind those simple things.

Jennifer Bailey
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

March 5, 2024

Daniel 3: 25, 34-43

Matthew 18: 21-35

Remember your mercies, O Lord.

These readings talk to us about forgiveness. Considering the chaos erupting in the Middle East, these readings feel timely and more important than ever. It can be hard to forgive. I can't imagine what the innocent people of Israel are going through, as well as those suffering in Gaza. I feel helpless witnessing what is happening from half-a-world away. We pray that everyone involved can find a way to forgive, learn to love their neighbor, and end the atrocities.

These events also make me consider forgiveness in my own life. My wife died 7 months ago after a two-year battle with breast cancer. Although it has left me devastated in many ways, it has forced me to reflect on many things. It is easy to carry anger and frustration under challenging times. I get frustrated with my children, my family, my co-workers. I have had many moments where I can't forgive, and instead focus on the anger. I think that it is human nature. It is why forgiveness and love are the focus of many readings in the Bible.

Although not easy, forgiving instead of reacting in haste is something I strive for. I still struggle with it. I have had to rely on my faith more than ever. I wish that we all take a moment to pray for clarity, love, and forgiveness in our chaotic lives. We must be humble enough to realize that we cannot do this alone, but need God's love to help us along the way.

Jon Allen
Parishioner

Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent March 6, 2024

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9

Matthew 5: 17-19

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

At the time that I write my reflection from the readings, there is a new war in the Holy Land. There are battles for peace and existence. I do not pretend to understand it all. I do know that friends, neighbors, and colleagues have real and credible fears and losses surrounding the conflicts. I cannot place judgement.

Often, we express an opinion to make conversation. I feel it important to respect the journey people have endured and that their voices be heard. To be a good listener is a skill and takes practice. I pray for better understanding to bring peaceful co-existence.



Thursday of the Third Week of Lent March 7, 2024

Jeremiah 7: 23-28 Luke 11: 14-23

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

As I read and reflect on today's first reading, the lyrics of a song came to mind... "When You speak confusion fades. Just a word and suddenly I'm not afraid. Cause You speak and freedom reigns. There is hope in every single word You say." ("I'm Listening" by Chris McClarney and Hollyn).

It is one of many songs that resonates in my heart, from which I am reminded how grateful I am that over time, through God's grace, I love God more, put him first more often, try to listen better to him, and to grow in faith and trust in him.

Did I always? No. I have always believed in God, but have not always had the same relationship with him. That gives me hope when I think of my family members who do not believe in God, or who believe, but do not seem to prioritize God and our faith. (I say "seem" because I only see and know so much, and God knows ALL about them." That reminds me that just as my heart changed, so can theirs and it will be God who will change them.

Through God's strength and courage within me, I try to humbly share our Lord with family in words and actions, praying for them always that they will turn to God and walk with him with a loving heart all the way to heaven.



Kelly Martinez
Lector

Friday of the Third Week of Lent March 8, 2024

Hosea 14: 2-10 Mark 12: 28-34
am the Lord your God: hear my voice.

As I am reflecting on my readings, my dear friend surprised me and portrayed what “Love of Neighbor” is all about. I had not been feeling well, and she went out of her way to bring me chicken soup and some other goodies to cheer me up! Wow! I thought that this was such great timing for her good deed. “Love of Neighbor” can be showing mercy to a friend, our next-door neighbors, our co-workers, the poor, etc. Also, another way we can practice “Love of Neighbor” is by praying for others. We can ask our Beautiful Blessed Mother for her guidance by saying a Hail Mary or the Rosary. Also, another lovely prayer is The Divine Mercy Chaplet, given to us by Saint Faustina Kowalska.

Prayer is powerful!



**Mary Hareziak
Parishioner**

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent March 9, 2024

Hosea 6: 1-6

Luke 18: 9-14

It is mercy I desire, and not sacrifice.

Today's readings made me reflect on the spirit and heart of being a Christian. We are reminded of the Christian spirit from the reading in Hosea, that just because we are Christians we will not tremble or suffer hardship. However, as we encounter tumultuous times we know we can always lean on God and trust in his will for us. There will be times when life can seem stressful, punishing, and demanding too much from us. But we can take comfort in knowing that God won't push us beyond our limits, rather, right up to them, and strengthen us and our relationship with him. After all, one cannot fully appreciate the mountaintop if they just took an elevator ride up.

Secondly, I am reminded of the heart of being a Christian. In our daily lives, our routines tend to become monotonous. Making daily devotions and prayer time is an excellent way to start your day. However, God does not want us to read our Bible just to read it, but to get to know him. He wants to be in a relationship with us. God is not looking for us to check boxes like the Pharisees who drew attention to themselves. Rather, God desires for us to humbly serve him by serving others. He wants us to come to him out of love, to love each other, and to do it especially when no one is looking.

Ken Micks
Parishioner

Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 10, 2024
Year B

2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23 Ephesians 2: 4-10 John 3: 14-21

Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

What strikes me about today's readings is how God's patience, mercy, and love permeate the texts. Even though the first reading addresses the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, God persistently pursued Israel and continues to pursue us. The leaders were "exceedingly unfaithful," yet God sent his messengers repeatedly, hoping they would repent and receive his compassion. God calls upon us and desires us to follow him, to experience his love and compassion. Although Israel was unfaithful and sent into exile, God, driven by his great love, restores Jerusalem and brings his people back home. I face the same choice today and every day: to follow God's path homeward or to turn away from him into exile.

Likewise, the reading from Ephesians emphasizes the same love and mercy. Israel did not receive God's favor because they were better than others, but solely because he chose them. God saves us due to his immense love for us, not because we are inherently great or deserving, but simply because he chose us out of love.

The gospel reading illustrates precisely how much God loves us: he gave us his only son. From the very beginning God sent prophet after prophet to guide us back to him, and with Jesus, God sent himself, to save us from ourselves.

Kristin Micks
Parishioner

Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent March 11, 2024

Isaiah 65: 17-21 John 4: 43-54

I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

In the reading from John, Jesus heals an official's son. The father in this story believed in Jesus' power of healing. He had a very strong faith! He traveled a long way and left his sick son because he believed Jesus could heal his son. He was persistent with his request and was not going to take no for an answer. Once Jesus said, "*Go. Your son will live*" he did not ask questions ("How can you heal from so far away?" Or "Can you give me a sign, so I know for sure?") He simply believed in Jesus!

This unwavering faith in Jesus is a true gift. It is human nature to want to control our destiny. We think if we do everything just as we "should" or as we are told, that we will get what we want. This is not always the case. I have seen my siblings apply to their dream colleges and be rejected despite their academic success in high school and high standardized test scores. At the time, they felt defeated. Ultimately, their faith in God's plan for their future gave them strength to continue their search for the next best college. I am now in my siblings' shoes, and I know with persistence in prayer and faith I, too, will end up where God wants me to be even if it's not my dream college.

Kate Nolan
Quest Council



Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

March 12, 2024

Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12

John 5: 1-16

The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.

In today's gospel, John 5: 1-16, Jesus cures a lame man who has suffered for over 38 years. When asked by the Pharisees who had cured him, the man couldn't say, because Jesus has anonymously slipped away into the crowd.

Many times in life we face an unknown fate; maybe before a serious operation, or a result from a life threatening accident. We naturally pray and ask God for a successful outcome. Often, after we are restored to normal health we might reflect on how this successful outcome came about. Maybe it was the skill of doctors and nurses, or the medicine. Or was it Jesus who had anonymously slipped away into the crowd of our busy daily world?



Tom Rogers
Parishioner

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent March 13, 2024

Isaiah 49: 8-15

John 5: 17-30

The Lord is gracious and merciful.

In the first reading God takes on a feminine image, that of a mother. We know our mothers will never forget their children. They forgive our mistakes and nurture us through difficult times. We can count on God to be as a mother to love us and forgive us over and over again.

The gospel presents the role of father. The Jews correctly judge that Jesus is equating himself with God, his father. The Lord tells them that the son imitates the father. God, the father, is working, and so our Lord works a miracle, even though it is the Sabbath. The Jews discount the miracle and decry its being performed on the Sabbath.

The passage says much about fathers and sons. Fathers must keep in mind that all they do teaches. It's so important that fathers know their sons well, and are present to them. Dad's acceptance and approval gives a boy the confidence to be all that he can be.



Louise Sullivan
St. Vincent de Paul Ministry



Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

March 14, 2024

Exodus 32: 7-14 John 5: 31-347

Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.

The Israelites turned away from God and instead worshipped a false god. This incurred God's wrath, but Moses implored the Lord to relent in punishing his people. We live at a time when there are many false gods out there. What false gods do we worship today? What takes us on a path leading away from God? Is it Money or Power? What about disregard for the Environment? Violence? Racism of all sorts? Hatred? Prejudice? What is God calling us to do as individuals? As a People? As a Church?

For those times when I also have gone astray, I pray that God will forgive me and lead me back to him. I pray for the wisdom and strength to listen carefully and answer his call.



Tom O'Malley
Parishioner

Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent March 15, 2024

Wisdom 2: 1a, 12-22

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

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.



One of the strongest teachings from God is to Love your Neighbor as Yourself. You are not to judge others or envy them. The mob in the readings had no real interaction with Jesus, but still they judged him and were so angry with him; they went to the extreme and wanted him put to death. Instead of engaging with and listening to Jesus, they spread false rumors about him. They were offended by what he was preaching, maybe because they felt inferior, and didn't like being reminded of their own failures.

This reading should remind us all that small jealousies can lead to disastrous consequences. In our everyday lives, instead of envying someone, spend time to get to know them. As many of us have probably experienced, others who seem to be perfect may have issues that we are not aware of. We need to remember that everyone has their own struggles and to always be kind.

During Lent ask God to increase our faith and help to remove any jealousies that we may have.

Jamie Woodcock
Parishioner

**Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent
March 16, 2024**

Jeremiah 11: 18-20 John 7: 40-53

O Lord, my God, in you I take refuge.

As I reflect on the reading my thoughts continually lead to trust in our Lord.

Trust that our God knows all, all of our worries and .difficulties

Trust that he will be at our side through everything, even when all seems hopeless or lost or just too much. We need trust that God will have his will be done.

When we feel we have been wronged, trust that God knows all and he will make everything right in his time.



**Diane Keeler
Parishioner**

Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 17, 2024
Year B

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 Hebrews 5: 7-9 John 12: 20-33

Create a clean heart in me, O God.

We approach Holy Week and our journey with Jesus to the cross. What have we done to spread God's Love and Compassion in our world today? Today's gospel indicates that Jesus' death will not be glorious, but, when he is lifted up from the earth, he will draw all people to himself. Over the last 20 years my neighborhood has gotten more diverse in ethnicity and belief. My neighbors and I no longer hail from one country, nor express one Creed, as our parents did. Unlike our parents, most of us live together appreciating and respecting the diversity of our neighbors. However, sometimes we fall back into our smaller world, expecting everyone to be and think like us.

The people of St. Michael Parish and our surrounding community grow more and more diverse. Maybe today Jesus is calling us to become more like that grain of wheat that dies, but still produces much fruit.

Lord, help us to die to our sins of selfishness and strict conformity, and open ourselves to God's mercy and goodness, wherever it is found and professed.

Pat Chuchla
Pastoral Associate



Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent March 18, 2024

Daniel 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 John 8: 1-11

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.



Which is harder, asking forgiveness for hurting someone or forgiving someone who has hurt you? I'm sure we have all been in both positions and I don't think either is easy. In today's gospel it strikes me that the woman brought before Jesus never asks Jesus for forgiveness. I can only imagine how scared she must have been. She probably found it hard to say anything at all.

Even as a life-long Catholic, and at no risk of being stoned by a crowd, I still find it a little frightening to enter the Reconciliation room and say my sins out loud to the priest. If the woman's silence didn't matter to Jesus, how much more merciful must the Lord be when I go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a humble heart asking for forgiveness? It is calming to know that Jesus loves me so much that he is always ready and willing to forgive me for my sins. If I want to live my life as a follower of Jesus, though, I also need to be ready and willing to forgive those who have hurt me, even if it isn't easy to do, and even if I haven't been asked for forgiveness.

**Dan Nowakowski
Parishioner**

Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Tuesday - 5th Week of Lent)
March 19, 2024

2 Samuel 7: 4-5a, 12-14a, 16 Romans 4: 13, 16-18, 22
Matthew 1: 16, 18-21, 24a

The son of David will live forever.

As a person of faith attending a public high school it can be difficult to express my faith outwardly. I worry that people will judge me if I openly make decisions based on my faith rather than what may be the more popular decision. But today's readings have assured me that when we trust God and live our lives as the Lord's disciples he will ensure that we are safe and happy. David, Abraham, and Joseph were all asked to put their faith in God, even if it was judged by their societies. They did so and God blessed them. He ensured them that they would one day live in the Kingdom of God.

I realize now that I do not have to be nervous about expressing my faith outwardly. I won't find true happiness and love by trying to fit in with what other people may be doing and thinking around me. I will find it by putting my faith in God and letting what I have learned as a Catholic guide my actions.

When I trust in God I know that he will guide me to live a fulfilling life that will one day lead me to the Kingdom of God.

Katie Karsky
Quest Teen Member



Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent
March 20, 2024

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

John 8: 31-42

Glory and praise for ever!

How often am I tempted to do something I know that I shouldn't do, but many times do it anyway? Today's reading from the book of Daniel tells us about the 'golden statue' the king erected and then commanded that all the people fall down and pay homage to that god. But today in 2024, we don't have false gods...or do we? In the quest for, and importance of so many material things, I often forget that I should be more concerned with living my life in accordance to the commandments. Being kind to others different than me, sharing what gifts I have been given, and having faith that God will give me what I need, not necessarily all that I ask of him—that is what should be the take away from this reading!



Aileen Collura
Parishioner

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

March 21, 2024

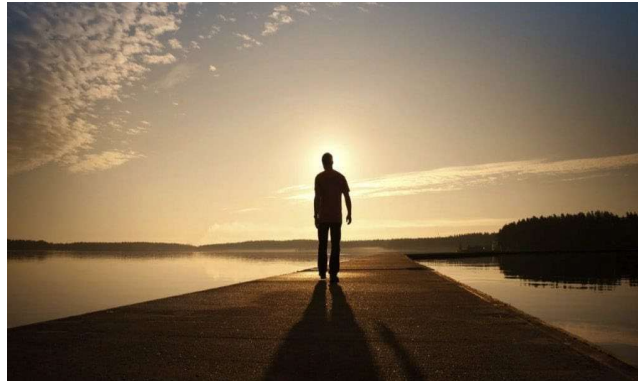
Genesis 17: 3-9

John 8: 51-59

The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

May times throughout our lives we learn many things, starting from our parents: how to sit properly, how to acknowledge people when you're greeting them, etc. Our teachers stimulate our brains to intake the knowledge they are going to share with us. The neighborhood children, as you are growing up, share stories that make you wonder. As time goes on you meet different people from whom you gain something from just by talking and listening to them.

My covenant of love for God grows deeper when I can understand what he needs from me by being open- minded and humble. God will send us messages in many ways, through our loved ones, friends, and even strangers. Just as Abraham, if we let God lead us and guide us, he will surely guide us the right way. Our only job is to listen to what he wants from us. Let God be God.



Marta Ruiz
Catechist

Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

March 22, 2024

Jeremiah 20: 10-13

John 10: 31-42

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice.

Despite all the signs that our Lord Jesus Christ has always given us, nothing is enough. What pain and sadness, knowing that we will never be satisfied! We always ask for more, and if we think about it, this behavior has always been the case over the years.

We accept miracles, healings, the gift of life; however, we feel we have the right to question God. I look at my life and ask myself, “how many times have I stopped seeing the good things in others and focused only on the bad?” even if the bad is just a mistake or a small misunderstanding, and the good is the majority. Why only focus on the negative and not see the effort that others make when offering something, be it time, advice, prayer! That is not enough for us! How ungrateful and arrogant we are!

That is why the innocence of children is beautiful; to any demonstration of affection they respond with a smile, a hug, or a kiss. I realize that gratitude, purity, and thankfulness is in innocence. We must be humble and think that everything we have and are given are gifts from our neighbors and from God. If a child can have such a natural, empathetic response, at what point did we lose that gift along the way and become judges of everything?

Rosalba Diaz de Leon
Parishioner

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent March 23, 2024

Ezekiel 37: 21-28

John 11: 45-56

The Lord will guard us, as a shepherd guards his flock.

When first trying to understand the meaning behind these two readings, I was puzzled. After reading and reflecting on these readings once more I noticed a common theme that I see in my everyday life, as well: unity. We are all involved in different activities, communities, academics, and much more. This is what makes us who we are and how we view the world around us. This helps us discover people who impact our lives and shape us into the individuals we will become. Our distinctive personalities are what makes the Earth such a beautiful place; however, we are united in ways we do not realize.

We are all blessed to live in a country full of promise and opportunity. We were all created with unique talents and interests that better the world and people we interact with. And most importantly, we are all unified under one God. This God may guide us differently, but no matter what, our God is here for each and every one of us at any point in our lives.

So yes, we are all special in our own way, but God, who created us in his own image, unites us all under his gracious and loving care.



Maggie Hughes
Quest Council Member

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
March 24, 2024
Cycle B

Mark 11: 1-10 Isaiah 50: 4-7
Philippians 2: 6-11 Mark 14: 1-15: 47

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

The time has come! Jesus, even knowing what awaits him, comes to manifest his triumph, and no one can imagine all the suffering he will experience; however, his love for us is great and he trusts until the last moment in our conversion, showing us peace, humility, love—observe how his people receive him, trusting completely in him.

"I gave my back to those who beat me... I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame." Isaiah 5: 6-7

But: What should our response be? Are we really ready to receive it?

Will we give a cold or warm response?

Let us remember that the kingdom of Jesus is not one of revenge or earthly wealth, but a kingdom of mercy and love.

"Who, being of divine form, does not covet equality with God?" Philippians 2:6

The true values that Jesus shows us have nothing to do with vanity or appearances. Jesus accepts his destiny. He has confidence in his father, because he knows that he is by his side. He knows that it is the way to redeem us, to save us, and he will not give up despite everything.

Let us be grateful and fulfill our obligations with a generous attitude. Let us cleanse our hearts to receive him with the best disposition and with the love that will lead us to the Father.

Connie Carrilo
Parishioner

Monday of Holy Week

March 25, 2024

Isaiah 42: 1-7

John 12: 1-11

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

In today's gospel Mary was moved in her heart to demonstrate her love for Jesus in a personal, unique way. She anointed his feet with perfumed oil, and dried them with her hair. Mary acted with purity of intention, only to show her care, love, devotion, and gratitude toward Jesus. Jesus received her love with tenderness and defended her.

Lord, I desire, during this Holy Week, when you are about to undergo a most painful passion out of love for me, to respond with that same profound sacrificial love for you, Jesus, in a personal, unique way with purity of intention, only to show my care, love, devotion and gratitude toward you. Come Holy Spirit and inspire my heart to return God's Out-pouring of Divine Love in a way that says to him, "I love you, Jesus, with all that I am, all that I have, and all that you created me to be.

Amen.



Daily Mass Attendee

Tuesday of Holy Week

March 26, 2024

Isaiah 49: 1-6

John 13: 21-33, 36-38

I will sing of your salvation.



HOW COOL IS IT THAT
THE SAME GOD, WHO
CREATED MOUNTAINS,
& OCEANS,
& GALAXIES, LOOMED AT YOU &
THOUGHT THE WORLD NEEDED
ONE OF YOU TOO?

In the first reading today Isaiah speaks of his calling, and God's calling to each of us. He tells of God holding us all dearly, and wanting all of our actions to be for God. However, I have often found myself fearing that what I have done has no purpose; that everything was done in vain. Isaiah speaks of a similar experience and quells those fears as he says that everything comes from the Lord, and our reward will be great with him for what we have done. It is often easy for me to feel that what I have done or experienced is going unnoticed, but Isaiah calls us to remember that God remembers all. He will reward us greatly as long as we remain faithful to him and his callings.

Rebekah Huie
Altar Server

Wednesday of Holy Week March 27, 2024

Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Matthew 26: 14-25

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Betrayal. All of us have been betrayed one time or other and it hurts. Whether by family or a friend. Both in different degrees. Some are small, and easier to forgive, and some are big and life-changing. The experience that we have suffered, no matter how big or small, can make it very difficult for us to trust anyone else with our personal lives.

How many times have I betrayed Jesus? And he has forgiven me. But Jesus understands betrayal. He was betrayed and handed over by one of his closest friends, Judas. Judas betrayed Jesus; this must have hurt him greatly. Judas was a friend and someone our Lord trusted. I don't know how many times in my life I have betrayed Jesus, but Jesus has forgiven me. The hardest part is, can I forgive myself?

Jesus never stops loving us, no matter what we have done. Jesus invites us to his table no matter what. Can we accept his invitation?



Ellie Olson
Parishioner

**Holy Thursday,
Evening Mass of the Lord's Last Supper
March 28, 2024**

Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 John 13: 1-15

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

The lessons that were obvious to me when Jesus insisted that he wash his disciples' feet and that they wash his and each other's feet were those of kindness, humility, and inclusion. Jesus wanted all of the disciples to feel equal during the foot-washing ritual that night of the Last Supper, as Jesus regarded himself as "one of the gang," holding himself in no higher esteem than that of his disciples. This ultimate act of humility and inclusion was difficult for them as they knew he was the Son of God, so they resisted

When my mom was promoted to department manager at a Chicago bank she was directed to stop having lunch with her co-workers, with whom she had worked for many years and shared friendships. Management felt that, since she was now their superior, she needed to distance herself from them socially and act more like a "boss." She begrudgingly complied. My mom didn't lack confidence or self-esteem by any means, but she knew that good leaders did not put themselves above others. She was instrumental in getting the policy changed and was able to again be "one of the gang."

Humility and kindness are not necessarily "cool" today. We're taught to achieve a high level of self-esteem and that we can be successful in anything we work hard to accomplish. However, it's important to avoid thinking so well of ourselves that we think more of, and about, ourselves than others.

Lynn Sutter
Communion Visitor

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

March 29, 2024

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9 John 18:1-19: 42

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

ON A DAY LIKE THIS, GOOD FRIEND

There is a very important phrase from Holy Scriptures. “There is no greater love than someone who gives his life for his friends.” Good Friday is a day in which we are invited to internalize the love that was manifested on the cross. We hear today the narration of the Passion and death of Jesus. The cross reminds us of two realities of faith: the first is the love he had for you. God sent his only son to save you and all of mankind. The other reality of faith is that the cross reminds us of the suffering and forgiveness he offers us. His suffering is raised and offered to God, and only in God will that suffering be transformed and liberated. Jesus came to redeem and to give a new feeling of suffering that leads us to not fear or run away, but with love, offer it up to God.

Jesus on the cross loves you, forgives and joins you in your suffering. Mercy comes out and God's goodness hugs the world through his Son.

Good friends, permit me to reflect on the greatness of Jesus Christ, and motivate me to pray, help my neighbors, act with kindness, and value my family. I know what God wants of me—to love whole-heartedly. Love is the answer.

Amen.

Maria Olivares
Parishioner

Easter Vigil

Saturday, March 30, 2024

Genesis 1:1—2:2
Isaiah 55: 1-11

Genesis 22: 1-8
Romans 6: 3-11

Exodus 14: 15—15:1
Luke 24: 1-12

“In the beginning”...tonight’s reading starts with “in the beginning.” We are at the end of Lent...but the beginning of Easter...the beginning of the foundation of our faith...Jesus died, but rose again.

In the beginning...God created a perfect Earth; a garden filled with beauty.

In the beginning...God created peaceful animals.

In the beginning...God created co-partners in that world.

Human weakness, human greed, human evil—and all the wonder of “***in the beginning***” was lost. And then Jesus came to us to remind us how we are meant to live. We are to care for one another, care for the world, even care for ourselves. We are to look to God; love God; worship God; thank God. And because his message was radical, in a world of evil and greed, Jesus was put to death.

But Jesus had the last word—Jesus overcame the evil and in his glorified body we are lifted, again, to work toward the model we had “in the beginning.” We are to love one another. Care for the stranger, the poor, the immigrant seeking food, shelter and welcome. We are to worship our God—to pray, to sing out our love and our thanks! We are to care for the Earth—God’s perfect garden was here once, what have we done to it?

In the beginning...

Donna McDonough

Easter Sunday
Solemnity:
The Resurrection of the Lord

March 31, 2024

Acts of the Apostles 10: 34a, 37-43

Colossians 3: 1-4

John 20: 1-9

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them. “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down, and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

- John 20: 1-9