Daily Reflections for Lent 2026

St. Michael Parish, Orland Park, Illinois

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Pray

Lord, guide me as I meditate on your word this Lent. Open my heart to your wisdom and truth. Help me understand the lessons of Christ's sacrifice. May this time of reflection transform my spirit and draw me closer to you.

Heavenly Father, fill my heart with peace as I journey through Lent. Help me grow spiritually and deepen my relationship with you. Guide my thoughts, words, and actions to reflect your love. May this season bring lasting transformation and devotion.

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 leads us to the cross of Christ, where we are to die to ourselves. However, the Cross is only half of the story. It is only after we experience the pain and agony of the Cross that we can experience the joy of Resurrection. Jesus invites us to leave our tombs of sin and death behind and to walk into the new life of Christ given to us at Easter.

We are grateful for the many parishioners who agree to share their reflections for Lent (and Advent) each year. While offering our thanks for our writers, it is a good time to offer thanks to the many people in our parish who offer their time and talents in the many additional ministries St. Michael has to offer. Thank you not only to our priests and deacons and the behind the scenes staff members, but also to the parishioners who work with our children, who decorate our church, the Eucharistic Ministers and readers at mass, those who clean and cook and coach, those who sing every week, who structure bible studies and retreats, who provide support to people suffering illness, who bring communion to homebound, and so, so many more. We do see you and we are thankful for you. God bless and have a spiritually healthy, happy Lent and Easter.

April 5, 2026

The Resurrection of the Lord

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.

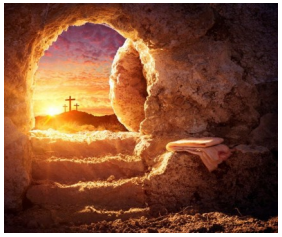
On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them. "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know 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

Alleluia!

I invite you to take a few moments each day, read the day's 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 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

February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday

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

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

"Return to me with all your heart…
and rend your hearts and not your garments."

As Lent begins, these forty days invite me to slow down and let God look gently into the deepest parts of my heart. They call me to move beyond my own desires and to notice the needs of the world around me. Through prayer and fasting, I hope to experience growth and an inner change of heart, a softer re-alignment toward God. Almsgiving, too, becomes more than simply offering money, it is the giving of myself—my time, my compassion, my presence—to those who need love and encouragement.

When I was a child Lent meant giving up chocolate or some other small treat. But I'm beginning to see that sacrifice is only one part of the journey. Lent can also be a season of choosing positive action, of taking steps toward mercy, reconciliation and generosity.

As I receive the ashes on my forehead this Ash Wednesday, may I also receive the grace I need to truly "turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." May this season help me return to God with all my heart, allowing God to shape me anew.

Pat Germino
Parishioner

April 4, 2026

Easter Vigil

Genesis 1:1—2:2 Genesis 22: 1-8 Exodus 14: 15—15:1
Isaiah 55: 1-11 Romans 6: 3-11 Matthew 28: 1-10

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

"This is the night…."

That is the sung prayer at the beginning of the most solemn mass of the year. This is the night where we remember and mourn and then celebrate our voyage from *nothing* to God's most chosen and beloved children.

This is the night when we celebrate the newest Roman Catholics—the men and women who studied and prayed and questioned the things we say we believe. Their questions and confusion mirror those of Catholic Christians from the beginning until today. Their commitment and bravery inspire the Church.

This is the night when we relive the fear of the disciples when their hero, their rabbi, their friend and teacher is put to death. And then, their confusion when his grave is found open and empty. Could it be? Could he have been taken away—or did he, as he foretold —was he raised from the dead back to life?

This is the night when we leave the church filled with joy and love for Jesus who died for us, and returned to remind us to take his lessons into our hearts.

Attend this mass. As our beloved Mother Mary at Jesus' birth, ponder what you see and what you hear in your heart. Let your soul be filled with peace. Happy Easter!

Donna McDonough

April 3, 2026

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

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.

The gospel for Good Friday of St. John's telling of Christ's passion and death made me think of my own sinfulness. While I feel that basically I am a good person, my humanity includes my imperfection and sinfulness. I thought of St. Peter and his denial of being one of Christ's followers, the Jewish chief priests who asked for Pilate to put Christ to death, the soldiers who arrested and beat Christ, and the multitude who yelled, *"...crucify him!"* I do believe that they also were good people, yet their sinfulness brought them to wanting Christ to be put to death. Was that for reason of greed, a higher station in life, fear, going along with the crowd lest they be suspect, or just doing their jobs, or what was easiest? They were not so different from me.

From the time Jesus was taken into custody by the soldiers he kept his cool and answered truthfully to them and Pilate, even to his last moment he forgave them. Peter was to become leader of his Church. He never lashed out in anger or hurt-he even promised the good thief that he would be with Christ in paradise! How fortunate for me and all of humanity that Christ is so loving and merciful. I have the hope of redemption despite my sinfulness.

Is that why it's called Good Friday? Christ's death and resurrection have given me hope.

Aileen Collura
Parishioner

February 19, 2026

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

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

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

When I hear Jesus speak of **suffering** and **rejection** I feel a quiet check on my instinct to avoid discomfort. I resist the cross in small ways—protecting my image, choosing ease—but the promise of **resurrection** invites me to trust that surrender is not loss, but life. The call to **discipleship**—to "deny" myself and "take up" my cross daily—lands as a practical, steady invitation. Let love lead my choices more than ego or fear. I'm challenged by the paradox: when I try to "save" my life through control or accumulation I end up anxious and thin; when I "lose" it for Christ—through humility, service, and truth—I find a deeper freedom.

The question about gaining the **world** and forfeiting the self—pushes me to examine what I'm chasing and whether it forms or erodes my soul. Today I want to carry my cross with intention: show up where I'd rather withdraw, listen where I'd rather speak, give where I'd rather keep. If my identity is anchored in Jesus, I can let outcomes be outcomes.

Tom Ring
Parishioner

February 20, 2026

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58: 1-9a Matthew 9: 14-15

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

Let's reflect on the meaning of our faith and how we live it out each day. In Isaiah, God points out that fasting doesn't mean much if people are still being selfish, unfair, or turning a blind eye to unjust acts around them. True fasting is not about giving something up, but about changing our hearts and showing kindness and compassion to those in need of it. This reading makes me think about how easy it is for people to do the "right" things on the outside, like going to Mass or giving something up for Lent, without actually changing how we act toward others.

Our gospel connects to this idea when Jesus explains why his disciples do not fast. He explains that they are not fasting because there will be a time when they will make sacrifices. This helps me see that faith should feel meaningful, not forced; people shouldn't just do religious things because they are told to, but, because they want to.

These readings challenge all of us to be more intentional about our actions. It's not enough to follow expectations; we need to be kinder, more patient, and more aware of how we can help the people around us. Whether it's standing up for someone, helping someone in need, or choosing not to judge others, these small choices show what we really believe. This Lent God is asking for a change of heart, not just following a rule.

Ellie Morrissey
Quest Council Member

April 2, 2026

Holy Thursday, Evening Mass of the Lord's Last Supper

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 Triduum is the holiest three-day period in Christianity. But to me the Triduum begins on the Sunday before Easter. That is when our students from the Youth Ministry (with the help of many others) present the Gospel of the Passion of the Lord at all the masses. This gives me HOPE for the future of the young.

One Holy Thursday evening, Fr. Leo Lyons, a retired but familiar priest at St. Michael, who was around 80 at that time, knelt down in front of a small child and washed her feet. It was amazing how many people came up to have their feet washed.

This is also the time when we welcome our new parishioners. The new candidates have been sponsored and attended both mass and classes throughout the year. This gives me HOPE for the future of the Church and it's relationship with the congregation.

The Triduum is one of the busiest times for the people of our church and culminates with the Easter mass. It is because of our volunteers that we can do so much. Have you thought of helping?

Joan Kozeluh
Retired Volunteer

April 1, 2026

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50: 4-9a Matthew 26: 14-25

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

"One of you is about to betray me."

These are the words Jesus spoke to his disciples at the Last Supper. In this gospel reading Jesus declares that one of his close friends/disciples will betray him. Some of us may have had the experience of our trust being betrayed. Or, we have betrayed someone we care about who trusted us.

This reading about the human betrayal that led to Jesus' crucifixion was not the final word. God brought out good from the evil betrayal and many other wrongdoings that Jesus endured.

Let us be prayerful in the upcoming days of Lent. Have we betrayed Jesus or ones that we love and care for? I know that I have. Let's bring it to the cross, and ask God for forgiveness.

Ellie Olson
Parish Hospitality Coordinator

February 21, 2026

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58: 9b-14 Luke 5: 27-32

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

Upon reading what God has asked Isaiah to share with all of us, I am reminded of my New Year's resolution. At the beginning of 2026 my sister had lovingly encouraged me to prioritize myself more. As a wife and mom of five kids, ages 3 to 16, I wondered, as I often have recently, what does prioritizing myself look like? There always seems to be something more important to do. As God's creation I am called to prioritize myself by resting on the Sabbath—to truly call it "a delight."

The way of following our Lord, as the gospel suggests, can make me more open to the healing of my Divine Physician.

Monica Cuasay
Families Sharing Faith Parent

February 22, 2026

First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2: 7-9; 3: 1-7 Romans 5: 12-19 Matthew 4: 1-11

Have mercy , O God, for we have sinned.

These readings remind us that each of us carries both Adam and Jesus within us. We have the parts that stumble, and the parts that long to grow—the parts that make mistakes, and the parts that reach for grace.

After 73 years together, we can say with humility, we are still learning, are still practicing patience. We are still figuring out how to love well. We have not always done it perfectly, but every day God gives us another chance to try.

We look back and see how God has worked in our lives quietly—not all at once, but slowly, through ordinary days and small choices. Even now, at 95, we trust that God is not finished with us.

So, we keep going. We keep hoping. And we keep believing that with God's help we can become a little more like Jesus and a little less like Adam, one day at a time.

Faith and Felix Germino
Parishioners

March 31, 2026

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49: 1-6 John 13: 21-33, 36-38

I will sing of your salvation.

In today's gospel reading we hear Jesus predict two future events. The first is his betrayal by Judas and the second is Peter's denial. As I studied these readings I found myself thinking about the following reflection questions: When have we knowingly chosen to sin against God and betray him like Judas did? When faced with conflict do we stand firm in our beliefs or do we fold like Peter did? When have we denied Jesus in order to "protect" ourselves the way Peter did? When have we let our fears override our faith?

As I reflected on these questions, and the actions of the disciples, I am reminded that we all fall. We fall short. Thankfully these failures don't define us. God can use them to reveal where we need to grow closer to him. We can repent and realign our hearts back to God. No matter how far we have strayed. God's love always provides us with a path back to him. God can restore us!

Kathy Ryan
Parishioner

March 30, 2026

Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42: 1-7 John 12: 1-11

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

In today's gospel we are reminded that Jesus told Judas, *"For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."* This reminds me to be grateful for stretches of time with people I love and respect. I am reminded that decadence in food, culture, environment are not sinful. They are beautiful. Cherishable. They interrupt the pattern of the day-to-day.

I lost my father this year. I think of the cherishable moments that happened between us. Moments when I very well could have been working for the poor.

We went to a Notre Dame game, just he and I.

Costly.

Also within 18 months of his passing.

Significant.

Precious.

An investment of time and treasure.

Special lifetime moments within our loving relationships call for the good china, expensive oil, entire fall Saturdays. We are reminded to pause. Connect and be present with all our senses.

NIU beat Notre Dame that day. Historic.

We went to mass in the basilica. Holy.

Huskies and the Irish. Hands extended in peace.

I will never forget. God was there.

Patti Brucki
NIU Alum class of '89

February 23, 2026

Monday of the First Week of Lent

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

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

Sitting in reflection on today's readings I am first reminded of the importance of taking time to quiet my mind, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to take that quiet pause and focus on Scripture. What Matthew 25: 31-46 says to me is that every day we all have an opportunity to live with deeper purpose and show compassion to others. Also, that God will judge us not first on religious profession, but more importantly on practical love shown to those in need.

This passage also underscores for me the importance of living out the Gospel in tangible ways. For me that means serving others by small acts of kindness: call, help, show up, listen—not just for people you know but also for people you don't know. Not only because righteous acts of kindness are what God expects of us, but also because small acts can be an unexpected lifeline for someone who is suffering or in need. Choosing indifference in these moments is an eternal loss. In contrast, responding with compassion, love, and grace shows true faith and service to God.

Crystal Pavloski
Parishioner

February 24, 2026

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

Isaiah 55: 10-11 Matthew 6: 7-15

From all their distress God rescues the just.

Prayer is something I have struggled with my entire adult life. As a child I memorized our meal and bedtime prayers, not really sure of their meaning. But as an adult my struggle has been putting the words together to get my point across to God, usually, like most of us, asking God for something. In this Gospel from Matthew Jesus tells us not to babble on in our prayers with so many words just to be heard. There is no need to put together an eloquent speech to God...he already knows what we need from him. The only failure when it comes to prayer is to stop praying. Some days prayer will seem easy, while others it may be more difficult. Just keep showing up in prayer...God will listen.

Mark Hansen
Parishioner

March 29, 2026

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Matthew 21: 1-11 Isaiah 50: 4-7

Philippians 2: 6-11 Matthew 26: 14-27:66

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

I always admired how humble Jesus was. He knew the power he had but he also knew his job was to live like the rest of us. He was totally obedient to God's plan for his life. Jesus knew what his future held for him; all the pain and suffering he would endure for us. I hope I can be as strong as Jesus as I live out God's plan for my life, even it if is not always an easy way. Oh Lord, give me strength to live out God's plan for me.

Kathleen Bergman and Courtney Brownlee
Parishioners

March 28, 2026

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 37: 21-28 John 11: 45-56

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

These readings remind me of how forgiving and loving God truly is. He continues to choose us, even after all the bad that we do. He chooses us. God is continuously placing things in our path that will help guide us in the right direction, and bring us closer to him. This gives me a sense of protection and belonging. If we are ever feeling alone or lost we must remember that God is always with us. *"I will purify them; I will live there with them; I will be their God and they will be my people."*

Pamela Lopez
Parioshioner

February 25, 2026

Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

Jonah 3: 1-10 Luke 11: 29-32

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

What stands out to me in today's readings is how quickly the people of Nineveh respond to God's message. Jonah shows up with a warning and without asking for more proof, they simply stop and change. I admire that because in my own busy life—as a mom, a wife, and someone juggling work, school, and sports schedules, I don't always respond so readily. I think, "I'll pray later," or "I'll be more patient when things calm down," but life rarely offers those perfect moments.

In the Gospel the crowd asks Jesus for a sign, and I realize that I do the same thing. I wait for things to feel easier before I shift my attitude or make the changes I know I need to make. I want clarity before I move. But the Ninevites show me that God doesn't need perfect conditions—he just needs a little willingness.

What gives me hope is how God responds the moment they turn toward him. God isn't waiting for my life to be less chaotic or more organized. He's simply waiting for me to pause.

This Lent I'm trying to make space for those small pauses: quiet prayers in the car, a deep breath before reacting, a tiny step toward God in the middle of everyday life. And I trust he'll meet me right there—chaos and all.

Nicole Hajdrowski
Parishioner

February 26, 2026

Thursday of the First Week of Lent

Esther C: 12, 14-16, 23-25 Matthew 7: 7-12

O Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

Today's readings speak to me about placing all of our trust in God and about God's desire for a relationship with us. In the first reading we hear how Esther is *"seized with mortal anguish."* She is desperate and carries the weight of saving her people on her shoulders. She realizes that she has no power over what the king will do.

So, she goes to the only one whom she knows has sovereignty over everything. She pleads her case before God and gathers others to pray with her. There is great power in intercessory prayer. Esther places her whole trust in God alone to rescue her people. While there are many things we cannot control in our lives, we can place all our needs in God's hands.

The Gospel affirms God's sovereignty while also revealing his heart for his children. Jesus invites us to come to the Father with all our needs and desires—not only so that he may provide for us, but so that he may spend time with us. God knows what we need, yet he wants us to come to him so that our relationship with him may grow.

God wants to give us good things. This reminds me of when my children come to me with their needs. While we love providing for our children, nothing is better than time together. Their joy is our joy. Our joy is his.

Kristin Micks
Parishioner

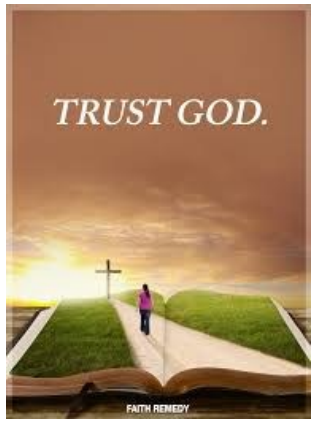
March 27, 2026

Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Jeremiah 20: 10-13 John 10: 31-42

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

Today's readings are a reminder that we will have doubters, naysayers, and haters throughout life. Jeremiah's "friends" are waiting for him to fall, and Jesus has to defend himself as the Son of God despite abundant evidence. How many times in your life have you felt the people around you weren't actually supporting you, but instead waiting for you to stumble to seize an opportunity? Or have you ever had to prove yourself over and over again before someone finally gave you recognition? Unfortunately, the experiences of Jeremiah and Jesus are more common that we'd like to acknowledge at times, but what both passages made us realize is that faith and trust in God are all we really need. And, once we have that faith it feels like God gives us the strength we need to face those that challenge us.



John and Victoria O'Connor
Parishioners

March 26, 2026

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Genesis 17: 3-9 John 8: 51-59

The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

18 years ago God had a calling for me and my husband. He called us to adoption. We had two children in middle school at the time. Just like Abraham we felt God calling us to make a difference and we knew it would have its challenges. We ended up getting three half siblings (two girls and a boy) who are a gift to us each day, but it has also been harder than anything we have ever done. Now in our 60's, having three teenagers is exhausting but also exhilarating. Through laughter and tears we know that we are following what God asked us to do. It is not always easy to answer God's call but in doing so we have been blessed abundantly! With five children I realize every day that what we say and do matters because we are the teachers of God's children and the generations to come.

Christine McEvoy
Former Parishioner

February 27, 2026

Friday of the First Week of Lent

Ezekiel 18: 21-28 Matthew 5: 20-26

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

In Matthew 5: 20-26 Jesus explains that being righteous is more than just following rules on the outside. He says that anger and hatred toward others are just as serious as physical acts like murder because they come from the heart. Jesus emphasizes the importance of reconciling with others quickly, especially before worshipping God. This passage teaches that broken relationships and unresolved conflict can damage one's relationship with God. Overall, the deeper meaning is that God cares about our intentions and attitudes, not just whether we technically obey the law.

This gospel truly reflects what I, along with most high-schoolers, have to live out on a daily basis. With a variety of different groups and social aspects to our lives, there's bound to be a point in time where you have hatred or a broken relationship with somebody. As Jesus teaches us in this reading it's important to reconcile with those around you, and not just harbor feelings that cause resentment and a rift in your relationship with God.

Joe Malloy
Quest Council

February 28, 2026

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 26: 16-19 Matthew 5: 43-48

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Just follow the rules! It's not as hard as we sometimes make it. In Deuteronomy today we are told that the Lord has declared that we are his very own people, with the expectation that we will obey his laws to receive "praise, honor, and renown"...Be a holy people to the Lord your God. Follow the rules!

But, then it is taken a step further. In Matthew we are encouraged to go above and beyond. *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* This is a step beyond just following the rules. Jesus wouldn't have this expectation if he didn't believe we could do it, and when we do that which is a little more difficult, we get closer *"to being perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect."* And isn't that what it's really all about?

Patty Pierson
Lifelong Parishioner

March 25, 2026

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

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

Here I am Lord: I come to do your will.

Today's gospel about the Annunciation of the Lord is one of my favorites. In this reading the angel Gabriel visits our Blessed Mother Mary, telling her not to be afraid. And then he tells her that by the power of the Holy Spirit she will conceive in her womb and bear a child. And that child will be our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God. Wow!

Whenever I read this gospel I'm reminded of the beautiful role model our Mother Mary is. She was so young, yet she trusted God in a way that no other person could. Her heart was sinless and pure, and even though she had some doubt, Mary said "yes" to God's plan for her. Mary's trust and faith in God was truly greater than her fear and doubt.

My prayer for us all is that we can have pure hearts like our Blessed Mother Mary and say "yes" to God's will in our lives. Through all our fears and struggles, may we always remember that God is with us. May we be open to listening to him and saying *"Here I am Lord: I come to do your will"* just like our Blessed Mother did.

Kathy Guarino
Society of St. Vincent de Paul—St. Michael Conference

March 24, 2026

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Numbers 21: 4-9 John 8: 21-30

O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.

One thing that really stood out to me in these readings is how easy it is to get impatient when things aren't going the way we want. In Numbers the Israelites are tired of the journey and start complaining about everything, including the food, the water, and even God. I see myself acting like them when school feels overwhelming, practices run late, or life feels repetitive. I sometimes focus more on what's going wrong that on what God has already done for me.

What I find interesting is how healing happens. God doesn't erase the problem for the Israelites right away. Instead, the people have to look at the bronze serpent and trust God.

For me, Lent feels like that moment of stopping and really looking at my own mistakes, bad habits and impatience instead of ignoring them. It's uncomfortable, but that's where growth happens. In the gospel Jesus talks about belief and how many people don't understand him. Faith isn't always easy, and sometimes I don't fully understand what God is doing in my life, either. But Jesus keeps speaking the truth, and by the end, people begin to believe.

These readings remind me that Lent isn't about being perfect, it's about learning to trust God more, even when life feels frustrating, and choosing faith over complaining.

James Lee
Quest Member

March 1, 2026

Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 12: 1-4a 2 Timothy 1: 8b-10 Matthew 17: 1-9

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

How many times have I forgone an opportunity to spread the message of the gospel? I'm blessed in that I have had parents, grandparents, family members, and friends share the gospel message with me since I was a child. And yet, I've lived far too many seasons of my life without following their example. Why? For me, I was able to come up with two main reasons. One reason is that there have been seasons in my life where God was not at the forefront of my mind, and my daily thoughts had too little room for him. Luckily for me, those individuals mentioned above continued sharing the gospel with me. Since deciding to let God back into my thoughts and life, I've found the gospel message everywhere. I'm forever grateful to all those who share the message.

The second reason why I've been hesitant to share the gospel is because of social pressures. It's true that we live in a society where people have many different worldviews and values. However, isn't sharing the good news worth perhaps being a little uncomfortable? If St. Paul could defend the gospel while sitting in a Roman prison, waiting to be put to death, surely I could defend the gospel under threat of feeling uncomfortable. I pray that the Holy Spirit gives me the strength and awareness to know how and when to share the gospel message.

Kevin Ryan
Parishioner

March 2, 2026

Monday of the Second Week of Lent

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

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

Today's readings reaffirm God's unconditional love for us. Even though we are sinners, God continues to show us compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. We ask God not to judge us by our sins and to be merciful. If this is how God treats us as his children, shouldn't we react to others in the same way?

While reflecting on the readings, I thought about the Golden Rule which Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells us to treat others the way we want to be treated. Jesus's words are extremely powerful, no judging or condemning! By living by The Golden Rule I am following God's example. I try to embrace the opportunities in my daily life to be generous, compassionate, and merciful. There's always room for more empathy! I pray that I will make good decisions when dealing with others.

I need to remember that God is merciful, compassionate, and forgiving. Unconditionally! I am responsible for my behavior. God will judge me by MY actions and how I live my life. As Luke tells us at the end of today's gospel, *"the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."*

Gloria Brudek
Catechist

March 23, 2026

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

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.

In Daniel, Susanna was accused of being unfaithful to her husband and as she was brought before the judge, she looked up to the heavens and prayed, she trusted in the Lord and was found innocent.

In John's reading a woman was accused of adultery and was about to be stoned. The Scribes and Pharisees tested Jesus to see what he would say and do regarding the stoning of the woman. How do we show our trust and faith in God?

We pray for certain things and when our prayers are not answered the way we want or expect, we feel that God has abandoned us. We shouldn't be troubled if we don't immediately receive from God what we asked for. He has a divine plan for us and knows what is best for us.

When I feel that my prayers are not being answered, I often say the words of Saint Faustina, "Jesus, I trust in you."

Bonnie Rafferty
Minister of Care

March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37: 12-14 Romans 8: 8-11 John 11: 1-45

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

John 11 reminds us that when Jesus stood at Lazarus' tomb he didn't rush past the pain—he wept. That comforts me as I grieve my dad, a great man with a big heart who left us suddenly at 81. God does not stand far from this kind of grief. He meets us in it. Jesus' words, *"I am the resurrection and the life"* remind me that death is not the end of the story. While I deeply miss my father—the love he gave, the strength he showed, the kindness he lived—this passage reminds me that he is held in God's care, and that one day we will be reunited. Until then, I grieve with hope, knowing God is near and will help me through the tough times. Love is not defeated.

A. J. and Mary Hull
Lectors

March 3, 2026

Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

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

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

Bob Dylan won a Grammy Award in 1980 for "Gotta Serve Somebody," a song he wrote during his "gospel" period. This song is about how no matter who you think you are, who others think you are, or your status in life, we all "have to serve somebody." The chorus of the song says, "Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord/ But you're gonna have to serve somebody."

It is a humbling experience to be wrong and to acknowledge the sins you have committed—to recognize the ways you have erred in choosing whom or what to serve.

Today's readings are reassuring of how the humility to acknowledge one's faults and amend one's behavior is more honorable to God.

Reconciliation is a beautiful sacrament in our Catholic faith. Lent is an opportunity to deepen this practice and align our actions to be in service of Christ.

Ryen Nagle
Parishioner

March 4, 2026

Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah 18: 18-20 Matthew 20: 17-28

Save me, O Lord, in your kindness.

After reading these passages together as a family, we all talked about the ways that we are living. We all think sometimes, as the mother of James and John in the gospel; we expect to get everything we want from God and others. We think as human beings do most of the time, in a selfish and ambitious way, by thinking of ourselves in different ways (at work, school, home, our daily routines.) We always want to be in first place, or to have power, and always to be the first ones. We think about the comfort we want to have without any sacrifice. We sometimes forget humility.

In the gospel passage Jesus was telling his disciples about the suffering, betrayal, and death that he was going to endure, but the mother of the sons of Zebedee was more worried about having secure places for her sons. Sometimes we don't accept suffering, or when we suffer, we think that Jesus has forgotten about us. Jesus reframes suffering as an expression of love and obedience rather than failure. Jesus is teaching us that true greatness is found not in power, but in humble service. The gospel is telling us to trust in God even or especially when faithfulness leads to hardship, and to redefine greatness through service rather than status.

The Guzman Family
Parishioners

March 21, 2026

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

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

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

There are times when it seems like the world is out to get us. Our kindness can be taken for weakness, our helpfulness exploited. When we speak the truth, we are hated by those who aren't ready to hear it. Galatians 4:16 summed it up perfectly: *"Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?* Verbalizing our faith is often not accepted in today's society that teaches individual freedom, unbound by morality or accountability. Jeremiah's earlier line, *"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you"* is sure to divide groups and escalate conversations to arguments. But we need not face these challenges alone..

When we feel trapped or persecuted it is important to remember the value of friendship in our life. Having someone on our side to be with us as we face the world can bring us peace and give us the confidence to tackle any problem. Sometimes, like Nicodemus, one person speaking on our behalf is enough to pause the mob mentality and allow us to be judged fairly.

One friend that never leaves our side is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are never alone, whether we remember it or not. Whenever we need guidance we need to slow our thoughts and listen, for he will show us the way. In Ephesians we ask God to be our armor, and in Jeremiah we ask him to be our sword. This Lent let us release our pride and open our hearts to our spiritual best friend.

Jim Kotecki
Eucharistic Minister

March 20, 2026

Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Wisdom 2: 1a, 12-22 John 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.

In today's gospel we are reminded of God's control over events, even in preventing Jesus' arrest until the right moment. Jesus' hour had not yet come. So often we lack patience and seek to have control of how things will enfold in our lives.

We pray to conceive a baby this month, we desperately want that promotion, or we want to afford the bigger house right now. It is very difficult to relinquish control. And, as a result, we may go through the suffering or waiting or coming to terms with what may never be.

We may have watched relatives and friends suffer in their own end of life's journey. We may not understand why someone survives weeks on sips of water and why God would choose to let them suffer so long. It can feel so hard to wait on God's timing

Today's psalm reminds us that God is close to the broken hearted. We may not understand his timing for events, but we need to continue to trust him.

Kristin Nagle
Parents and Tots Ministry

March 5, 2026

Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah 17: 5-10 Luke 16: 19-31

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

I have always welcomed the opportunity to reflect during the Season of Lent. I treasure the special services and Masses, especially the Easter Triduum. Yet, often I also feel like a Lenten failure because I frequently struggle with sacrificing something (willpower and I are not good friends.) So, I have tried going to Mass an extra day of the week or praying more often with some success. However, last year, my search for fulfillment led me to volunteer as a Prayer Angel here at St. Michael. I had the most satisfying and gratifying Lent!

I am so appreciative of God's mercy and patience…

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose hope is the Lord.

Wishing you all God's peace during this beautiful Season!

Debbie Brodinski
Greeter

March 6, 2026

Friday of the Second Week of Lent

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

Remember the marvels the Lord has done.

In today's reading and gospel there is an overwhelming theme of betrayal and injustice. We are taught at an early age that there are consequences to our actions. Sometimes we suffer because of these consequences, but God wants us to know that suffering can be part of God's will. Whether or not we learn from these consequences and suffering is up to us. We need to remember God's love remains constant and his fairness will overcome.

We may push others away because we are jealous (like Joseph's brothers). Resentment is not the way to react. We must remember we are all equals. Once we accept that, we grow stronger in God's love and his will prevails. Sometimes we don't even see those sent to us by God. Just meeting new people could make a big impact on us, but we must take the time and pay attention. God tests us and will send others into our lives for a reason. Instead of rejecting them, we need to say, "look at this beautiful person God has brought into my life."

Life may feel unfair and difficult at times, but we can control our reaction to situations. We may not understand why there is injustice and suffering, but we need to remember that God is in control and will make things right in the end.

Jamie Woodcock
Parishioner

March 19, 2026

Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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.

Joseph's response to Mary being with child shows his obedience to God's will and his love for Mary and the child to be, as he takes them to Bethlehem and provides love and security.

Joseph is an inspiration because he cooperated so quietly behind the scenes. Due to his trade as a carpenter he is the patron of laborers, craftsmen, and engineers.

Let's look at the rest of his many attributes: kindness, humility, lack of personal ambition, dependability and commitment for Mary and Jesus. Together Mary and Joseph guided Jesus to fulfill his destiny. Joseph's character is beyond reproach and makes us think about who in our lives fulfills that role. Joseph exhibited a beautiful strength for fathers and families, and also set an example for spiritual fatherhood.

How can everyday man emulate St. Joseph's qualities? One way is being a protector of your family's physical, moral and spiritual well-being. Living in fidelity to God, by seeking him in silence and prayer is another way. To be intentionally present in your family life, accepting responsibility and provide a steady, loving role model, like St. Joseph. Pope Francis dedicated a "Year of St. Joseph" to encourage deeper devotion to him Let us all pray to have his quiet strength, faith, and the compassion that he showed, doing God's will and caring for his Holy Family.

Mary and Bob Esposito
Parishioners

March 18, 2026

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 49: 8-15 John 5: 17-30

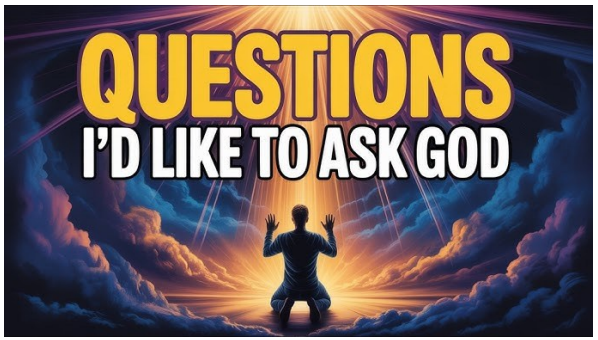
The Lord is gracious and merciful.

As we grow older, we sometimes assume we will also grow in wisdom and find out the answers to the many questions we have about life. Unfortunately, we many times end up with more questions than answers.

In the reading from Isaiah we are assured that God's love is always there for us. In John's gospel we are asked to help to do the will of the Father by following Christ's teachings to attain eternal happiness.

Are we truly doing God's work in our everyday lives? Do we feel God's love in our darkest moments? We continue our journey…

Tom Rogers
Parishioner



March 7, 2026

Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

Micah 7: 14-15, 18-20 Luke 5: 1-3, 11-32

The Lord is kind and merciful.

When I read these passages, what resonates most is how much they relate to real life, not just something in a church setting. In Micah, the part about God guiding like a shepherd makes me think about how stressed I get trying to figure out everything on my own: schools, friends, and my future. It's kid of a relief to imagine that I don't have to carry all of that by myself. And when it says God throws our sins into the depths of the sea, it reminds me that I don't have to keep beating myself up for messing up. I make mistakes sometimes, and knowing there's a chance to reset actually helps me breathe a little easier.

The Prodigal Son story hits even closer. I see myself in both brothers. Sometimes I'm like the younger one, doing things I regret and hoping people will give me another shot. Other times I'm more like the older brother, getting annoyed when something feels unfair. In my everyday life, at home, with friends, and even at school, I deal with those same feelings. The story pushes me to be better at forgiving, not just wanting forgiveness. It reminds me to relax, let things go, and appreciate and notice when people change.

Ben Knutsen
Quest Council Member

March 8, 2026

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 17: 3-7 Romans 5: 1-2,. 5-8 John 4: 5-42

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

"Give me a drink."

How would I have reacted to that? "Go get your own!" Sometimes it is a little difficult to understand the mindset of people living two millennia ago. Would I even have listened to what Jesus has to say—or would I have rejected him right from the outset? Would I have been more like the people at Massah and Meriba, questioning everything Moses had done for them?

The woman was open to listening to Jesus even when he was telling her some of the worst things she had done. Would I have listened? Or would I just stomp off, telling him he didn't know what he was talking about?

Being willing to look at myself honestly—especially when someone else is telling me my flaws—requires a humble heart. As the Psalm reminds us, *"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."*

If I did find the ability to really listen to what Jesus said, would I have the same reaction as the woman by the well, *"You are a prophet."* Then going to the town and telling everyone to go see him—perhaps he is the Christ! What faith! What an example for us to follow! Do I have the courage to do as she did—and invite others to follow Christ?

Peggy Mraz
Lector

March 17, 2026

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12 John 5: 1-16

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

What's the value of a nickel? 5 cents. What can you buy with it? Nothing.

What's the value of a dime? 10 cents. What can you buy with it? Nothing.

What's the value of a soul? Nothing in cash. You can't buy with it or sell it or trade with it. I can't see it or hold it, but I can lose it, or at least I can tarnish it. And sometimes I can shine it, too. It is still Lent. There is still time I can show, even just to myself, that I value my soul; I can guard it, I can plump it up. Before I celebrate Jesus' miracle-of-miracles, his resurrection, I can "avoid sin and be faithful to the gospel"- the words we heard on Ash Wednesday. Those two things alone are fuel for my soul. Avoid sin? Well, if it's clear-cut, black/white, right/wrong, I have a decent chance. Faithful to the gospel? Jesus puts his own life in danger by healing on the Sabbath—the Pharisees seem to think that is against the "law." Jesus does the holy thing anyway.

My soul needs refreshing. More than anything this Lent I need to challenge myself when I get complacent about my "goodness" or "righteousness." What is the value of personal challenge, or danger, or embarrassment next to my soul? What value to you put on your soul?

Ed Ericson
Parishioner

March 16, 2026

Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 65: 17-21 John 4: 43– 54

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

When reading and then reflecting on the first reading, I am moved by the feeling of hope and a new beginning for those who choose to have faith in and trust in God. In him, he offers us mercy and forgiveness for our past sins, and does not hold them against us. He strengthens us in our sufferings. Our choices and deeds in life will follow us in our death. Through God we are given the opportunity for a good and fruitful life. Life can be good if we give it a chance.

The second reading reminds me of the importance of including prayer in our lives: not only engaging in prayer, but having a persistent prayer life. Having faith in God and believing that all is possible through him is what he wants for us. There are countless miracles all around us and I need to continuously remember that a strong faith life is what is needed for us to clearly see those gifts.

Robert Hiter
Eucharistic Minister

March 9, 2026

Monday of the Third Week of Lent

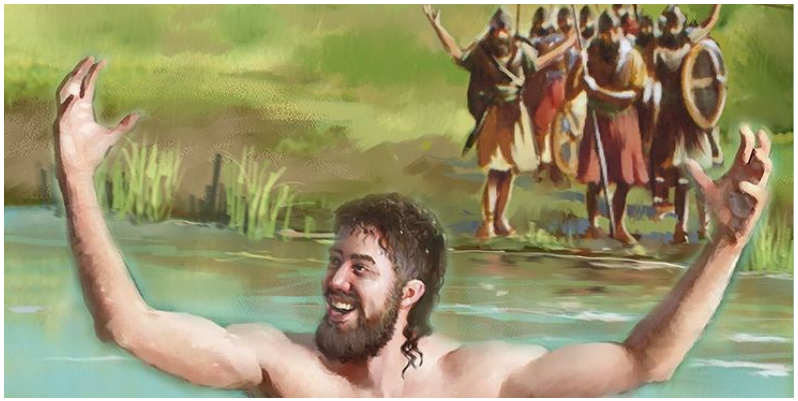
2 Kings 5: 1-15ab Luke 4: 24-30

Athirst is my soul for the living God. When shall I go and behold the face of God?

Na'aman's story reminds me that I am "in control" of very little in life. As Na'man's expectations for a cure do not measure up to what he is asked to do, I am reminded to seek "God's will" in my life as opposed to **my** choosing what to do for God.

Also, in Luke's gospel, am I open to God's will? I need to be open to God's will, not my will. I need to listen to all the messages that I receive and not just the comfortable ones that I might "hear" or those that are easier for me to do.

Am I being open to helping those in need?



Rob Allison
Parish Council

March 10, 2026

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

Daniel 3: 25, 34-43 Matthew 18: 21-35

Remember your mercies, O Lord.

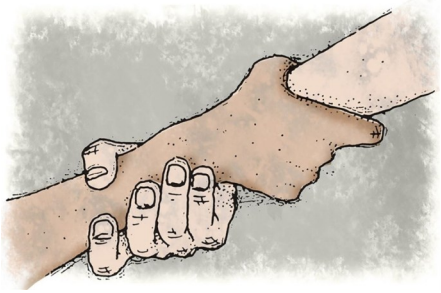
Today's gospel focuses on the gift of forgiveness. The most important figure in this parable is the king, who showed kindness and mercy. The servant who was forgiven did not show forgiveness to the one who owed him much less.

We learn at the end of the gospel the merciful king is like God. *"So will my Heavenly Father do unto you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."* Jesus wants his mercy towards us to be an example of how we treat others.

My first thought was to consider the Golden Rule. *"do unto others what you would have them do to you."* Matthew 7: 12. For instance; do something helpful, cut an elderly neighbor's grass or shovel their snow. Offer kindness, words of encouragement, a compliment, provide support. Offer "peace be with you" at Mass to as many people as possible, with a smile.

Jesus is also telling us to forgive constantly, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Let our whole life become an act of forgiveness.

WHY?...IF YOU FORGIVE OTHERS, GOD WILL FORGIVE YOU!



Bill Nebel
Minister of the Eucharist

March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Lent

1 Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a Ephesians 5: 8-14 John 9: 1-41

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

In today's readings we learn in 1 Samuel how David was chosen by God, and eventually was known as a man after God's own heart. In Ephesians we learn about darkness and light—how darkness is sin and leads to death, and light leads to life—hence why we call Jesus, the Way, the Light, and the Life of the World. And finally, in John 9 we learn about the miracle of Jesus giving a man his vision after he had lived his whole life as blind. The parallels in these readings are centered around our hearts, and whether we choose to live in darkness or in light. To live in the light is to have a heart like David, and to long for God's heart. To live in the light is to be fruitful and to do what is pleasing to the Lord. To live in the light is being like the blind man, once he saw the light he accepted it and worshipped Jesus—who is the light. This Lenten season my prayer for all of us is to avoid darkness and the sin and death that comes from it. Instead, I pray we can all have hearts of kindness and humility, do what is pleasing to the Lord, and worship Jesus—for we were blind and now we can see.

Ken Micks
Parishioner

March 14, 2026

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

Hosea 6: 1-6 Luke 18: 9-14

It is mercy I desire, and not sacrifice.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus tells a parable on the issue of pride. The Pharisee in this case is ironically not the righteous one. He takes comfort in the fact that he looks good on paper: he earns a just living and lives a morally sound life. However, he uses this in a condescending way, comparing himself to the tax collector and seeing himself as superior solely because of his "perfection." The tax collector is honest with God in his prayer and admits himself a sinner. He knows he has no righteousness in his dishonest living. Jesus' message is that God does not judge based on performance or simply living by the rules without humility. Instead, he values honest hearts.

I connect this to my experience as a teen because I see many kids around me living primarily for their reputation and ego. Social media image, friends, and sports become the center of life. With some people it feels like everything they do is inspired by a perfect, egotistical image they want others to see. However God's hope for all of us is not how impressive we are to other people. He would hate to see us constantly comparing ourselves to others and looking down on them with jealousy or pride. God wants us instead to live with kindness, humility, and a genuine love for him. God calls us to pursue a consistent relationship with him

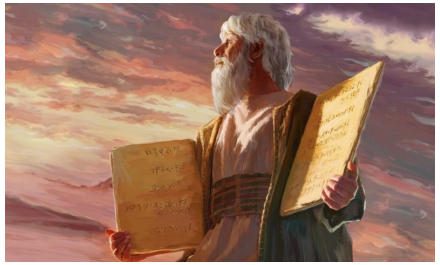
Gavin Crotty
Quest

March 11, 2026

Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9 Matthew 5: 17-19

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.



Jesus tells us that the world as we know it will pass away. What will take its place is the establishment of his new kingdom of heaven, already begun through his resurrection. Laws, statues, ordinances and commandments don't *restrict* us, but *ready* us, in eager anticipation for this age to come. In obeying those laws, statutes, ordinances and commandments from God, we become a wise and discerning people, close to the Lord who fulfills his will to be with him for eternity.

Ted Meehan
Religious Education Catechist

March 12, 2026

Thursday of the Third Week of Lent

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

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

In today's readings the prophet Jeremiah is inviting each and every one of us into a relationship with Jesus. God is asking us to listen to his voice and not harden our hearts. He is urging us to not become deaf to what he is asking us to do, but rather respond. Maybe that means we go out of our way to help an elderly family member or neighbor, or spend time to listen and comfort someone in need. It may also mean we are open to sharing our resources, time, and talents with the St. Michael community.

Lent offers us the opportunity to draw closer to God through the sacrifices we make: attending Mass, a Lenten prayer service, and participating in the sacrament of Confession. The prophet Jeremiah is showing us the way to accomplish our Lenten goals. He is inviting us into a life-long relationship with Jesus and a way to a fulfilling, rewarding life.

Linda Gardner
St. Michael Parish Greeter

March 13, 2026

Friday of the Third Week of Lent

Hosea 14: 2-10 Mark 12: 28-34

I am the Lord your God: hear my voice.

My paternal grandparents were born in Lebanon, a country with an Arab culture shaped by Western influence and steadfast Christian traditions. Biblical Lebanon is mentioned 71 times in the Old Testament. Part of the boundary of the Promised Land, it is a metaphor for strength, prosperity and divine blessing. The cedars are well-rooted, like one who seeks to please God. God promises love and healing to those who repent.

Today's gospel calls for a complete love for God and neighbor that should extend to all areas of life. We are created to love God and love others– those two cannot be separated. What does this look like in practice? Like the scribe, we can be open and listen. Love is more than positive feelings. There are people we may not like very much, people we try to avoid, yet, we are called to extend our love to everyone. Love is a choice. It calls for commitment. It requires action. Ask God to strengthen your heart. Stay rooted in faith. Give it all you've got!

Carol Gianoli
Worship Commission