



Christ in Our Neighborhood



February 26, 2023

Prayer

Father, through our observance of Lent, help us to understand the meaning of your Son's death and resurrection, and teach us to reflect it in our lives. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

The playwright, Oscar Wilde once wrote, "I can resist anything but temptation."

Temptations certainly test our free will, but they don't conquer it. Our free will remains intact, despite our sin.

Our first reading invites us to see the first temptation which gave the world the first (original) sin.

On the one hand, this story reminds us that we had failed to use our God-given free will for the good. On the other hand, despite Adam and Eve's wrong action, we see that free will works. Free will, regardless of our actions (good or bad) gives us our identity as human beings. We aren't robots. We are humans, made in God's image; complete with free will.

The purpose of these readings today is to recognize our identity as human beings. Made in God's image, we may freely will to love God who freely wills to be in communal love with us.

Question

In the past week, how have I freely chosen to love God or others?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 5:12-19

Saint Paul comments in his Letter to the Romans about the sin of Adam.

Adam's free will to sin brought about his condemnation and the condemnation of the world. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

Following St. Paul, the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul". (Catechism, 402).

Thankfully, as Paul also reminds us:

"... just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all."

God, who wills to love us, gave to us his Son who - like us in all things but sin - wills to love our Father in heaven. Jesus' greatest act of love - death on a cross - conquered Adam's transgression and restored us to life with the Father. Only by God's will to love us are we saved.

Question

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, what does "thy will be done" mean to me?

The commentaries over these 6 weeks of Lent are presented by Bishop John Dolan of the Diocese of Phoenix.

1st Sunday of Lent

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Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

The Gospel of Matthew gives us three temptations that Jesus had to endure in the desert.

The First Temptation: “Command these stones to become bread.” Jesus rebukes Satan with the words, “One does not live on bread alone.”

Jesus will for God is more important than food for a day. As Catholics, we make a free will act of fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday in solidarity with Jesus who is faithful to His Father in Heaven.

The Second Temptation: “Throw yourself down.” Jesus says, “You shall not put your God to the test.”

Jesus freely renounces such a test as a sign of his fidelity and communion with the Father. This Lent calls us to freely place our faith in God.

The Third Temptation: “All this I shall give to you, if you worship me.” Jesus replies, “The Lord your God shall you worship, and him alone shall you serve.”

Jesus freely wills to love God above all things; especially the enticements of this world. Lent calls us to freely abandon the trappings of this world and seek the things of heaven.

Question

In what way am I letting go of the things of this world and freely choosing God?

This Week's Task

Rather than giving up something for Lent, the Church invites us to increase our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

In what way will I increase my prayer life?

In what way will I empty myself physically (through fasting and abstinence) to make room for God?

In what way will I increase my life of charity?

Group Prayer

The leader invites the group to say the following prayer of St. Ignatius together:

Take, O Lord,
and receive my entire liberty,
my memory, my understanding and my
whole will.

All that I am and all that I possess
You have given me.

I surrender it all to You
to be disposed of according to Your will.

Give me only Your love and Your grace;
with these I will be rich enough,
and will desire nothing more.

Continue with Psalm 51

Psalm

Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out
my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt^[1] and of my
sin cleanse me.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always:
“Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.”

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Conclude with an OUR FATHER



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

God our Father, help us to hear your Son. Enlighten us with your word, that we may find the way to your glory. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Genesis 12:1-4

Our readings today, beginning with Genesis, invite us to listen up!

Abraham received a call from God while in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans (Iraq, along the Persian Gulf).

God initiates a covenant with Abraham and his descendants with a promise that he will make of them a great nation.

Abraham, the Patriarch of our faith, is honored as one whose faith begins with listening to God. He hears God's call and he responds. "Abraham went as the Lord directed him."

Lent invites us to put God first in our lives and listen to the Lord. In order to respond to God's call, we must use our ears to listen. In order to listen, we must take the time to quiet ourselves and be present to the Lord.

Listen Up! God is calling us to do His will!

Question

Do I have a quiet place in my home - a meditative place - where I can focus my attention on God?

Commentary

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 1:8-10

Listening to God is more than just hearing God speak to our hearts. True listening requires trusting in God. Many of us may hear a homily at Mass that could change our hearts. But, unless we place our trust in what we hear, we cannot respond. For example, we hear that we must love our enemies. These words sound nice but fall on deaf

ears - unless we actually make an attempt to "love our enemies."

St. Paul's letter to Timothy encourages us to not only hear the Gospel (the Good News) of Jesus, but to place our trust in it. The temptation is to trust only in our own

works and designs for our lives. Instead, Paul invites us to place our trust in the saving work and grace of Jesus who destroyed death and offered life eternal.

After all, who among us - using our own designs - can conquer death or fight our way into heaven? Only Jesus can! This is why we must listen to Him and trust in Him alone.

If we trust that Jesus conquers death and gives life, then why would we fail to listen to him and trust him in other things that affect our life?

Listen Up! Jesus is calling to trust in Him!

Question

How have I trusted God lately?

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Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke each have the Transfiguration account. In each of the Gospels we read about the appearance of Moses and Elijah and Peter's response, "It is well that we are here."

Also, in each account, Peter expresses a desire to make three booths for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.

Only Matthew (not Mark or Luke) inserts the words, "He [Peter] was still speaking, when" God spoke from a cloud. In Matthew's Gospel, God interrupts Peter and tells him to listen to Jesus.

When we have something to say, we don't want to be interrupted. Lent, however, challenges us to stop talking and to Listen up! In these forty days of Lent, God wants to interrupt our normal way of doing things and listen to His Son!

The Gospel tells us that when the disciples heard the voice of God, they fell on their faces in awe. Lent challenges us to be in awe with the voice of God and of his Son. To be awestruck is to be alert to the fact that God is speaking.

This Lent, we should allow God to interrupt us - even disrupt us.

Listen up! God may just have something to say!

Question

This Lent, in what way am I allowing God to interrupt - disrupt - my normal way of life?

This Week's Task

Find time this week to visit the church and sit quietly before the Blessed Sacrament. Try not to say anything! Simply place yourself before the presence of God and listen to Jesus speak to your heart. Let Him interrupt your busy thoughts.

If you can't make it to church this week, try to find a quiet place at home and simply rest in the quiet.

Group Prayer

The leader invites each member to pass around a crucifix. The participants are invited to venerate the cross with a kiss or some other form of reverence. As a member holds the cross, he/she will say:

Lord of Abraham,

help me to trust in You.

Father of Jesus, help me to listen

as I place my trust in You!

The leader will then guide the group in praying **Psalm 33**.

Psalm

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

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

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

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
To deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

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

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

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

Conclude with an OUR FATHER

*Does your home have a designated place
for quiet reflection?*

Have you created a prayer corner or meditation garden?

*How does your home give witness to
your Catholic faith?*



Christ in Our Neighborhood

March 12, 2023

Prayer

Father, you have taught us to overcome our sins by prayer, fasting, and works of mercy. When we are discouraged by our weakness, give us confidence in Your love. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Exodus 17:3-7

Our readings this weekend invite us to thirst for God. God supplies us with all of our needs; even in times of trouble.

The Israelites complained as they wandered in the desert. Suffering from thirst, they began to grumble against the Lord. Though God lead them through the Red Sea and away from Pharaoh's army, they still failed to trust in the Lord.

How many times have we complained to God when our immediate needs weren't met? We can easily forget that God has always been on our side. Instead of counting our blessings, we find a reason to blame the Lord for our temporary misfortunes.

Instead of thirsting for immediate results, try thirsting for God! The Israelites were impatient. Instead of being impatient ourselves, perhaps we can patiently thirst for God who, in His time, will quench our thirst.

Thirst for God!

Questions

Have I ever been impatient with God?
Do I take time in prayer to count my blessings?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

When we make it our spiritual practice to thirst for God, we are acknowledging that God had already quenched our thirst at some point in our lives. Our hope in God is based on our prior experience of the Lord who has not disappointed us.

St. Paul had a perfect faith in the Lord who satisfied his every longing. This is why he could confidently say,

"...we boast in hope of the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

We must hope in God who does not disappoint us. We must not be afraid to hope in God. Why lose another day without hope?

Pope John Paul II said, "It is very important to cross the threshold of hope, not to stop before it, but to let oneself be led." (Crossing the Threshold of Hope)

Our Lenten practices should include embracing the virtue of Hope and letting the love of God quench our souls.

Our hope is in the Lord who does not disappoint!

Question

When did I last place my hope in the Lord?

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3rd Sunday of Lent

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Commentary

Gospel: John 4:5-42

Following our theme of thirsting, we find in today's Gospel of John the story of Jesus and the woman at the well.

Jesus asks the Samaritan woman to give him a drink. Later, he says to her that he will provide for her living water. In both cases, the woman misinterprets his meaning and assumes he is speaking about the water in the well. However, he has something else in mind.

Jesus says, "Give me a drink."

We thirst for God only because He first thirsts for us. He longs to be in communion with us and continually calls us to give Him our hearts. Our love should pour from our hearts to satisfy our God.

Unfortunately, on our own, we have proven that we can't give God a drink. On our own, we cannot pour out our love.

Jesus invites us the woman to drink from Him, the Living Water.

We cannot begin to pour out our love for God until we first drink from His Son, the water of eternal life.

It is said that we cannot give what he have not first received. Thanks be to God, we are able to love God with our whole heart because God has first loved us through Jesus His Son.

Question

How have I responded to the Love of God in my life?

This Week's Task

The readings for these next few weeks are designed to assist those who are preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation through Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. For example, the image of water in today's readings relates to the Sacrament of Baptism.

Take time this week to pray for those who are preparing to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation in the Church.

Group Prayer

The leader invites each member to pass a bowl of water and make a sign of the cross as a personal renewal of their own baptism.

After all have renewed their baptism, the leader invites the group to remain quiet for forty seconds. This is a time to be still and meditate on the Love of God which has been poured out on us through Jesus.

The leader will then guide the group in praying Psalm 95

Psalm

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

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

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

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds,
the flock he guides.

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

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."

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

Conclude with an OUR FATHER

*Have you celebrated all of your
Sacraments of Initiation in the Church?*

*If you, or someone you know, would like to begin the
process of full initiation in the Church, please visit your
parish priest or director for religious education.*



Christ in Our Neighborhood

March 19, 2023

Prayer

Father of peace, we are joyful in your Word, your Son Jesus Christ, who reconciles us to You. Let us hasten toward Easter with the eagerness of faith and love. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13

Our readings this weekend invite us to see with God's eyes. The Book of Samuel challenges us to step outside of the obvious and ordinary way of seeing and to use our eyes of faith.

Using our eyes of faith allows us to see as God sees.

How does God see? God does not give value to our appearance, our age, or stature in life. Instead, God values our hearts and souls.

As our reading reminds us: "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart." If we use only our natural senses to handle life's issues, we will never escape the trap of this world. Instead, this Lent invites us to take the extraordinary step into Christ's world and see our world from His perspective.

This requires a conversion of the heart.

Question

What issue in my life today needs to be examined from God's perspective?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

As the days become a little longer and the sun warms the Earth, our calendars do not need to confirm what our senses already tell us. Spring has arrived and we see signs of it all around us.

If spring has come and winter is behind us, we turn off our heat, open the windows, and let the warm breezes fill our home.

In a similar way, our 2nd Reading from Paul to the Ephesians reminds us to live as children of the light and not in darkness. The light of faith in Christ Jesus warms our spiritual hearts and calls us out of our spiritual hibernation.

We are told, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Why continue to live in the cold darkness of our sins, when Christ our Light can warm our souls?

This Season of Lent invites us to see with God's eyes that we are no longer in darkness. Instead, we live in Christ our Light!

Question

What steps am I taking this Lent to remain in the Light of Christ?

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4th Sunday of Lent

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Commentary

Gospel: John 9:1-41

Our Gospel today reminds us that there are three ways of seeing. When the man who was born blind is healed by Jesus, he receives “natural” sight. What a miracle!

However, a second miracle occurs as this man is able to proclaim that Jesus is a prophet.

Normally, the world “prophet” would be an extraordinary title for anyone in Jesus’ time.

A prophet was one who was favored by God with wisdom. The healed man not only received physical sight, but “insight” to recognize that Jesus was an extraordinary person.

A third form of seeing occurs in the Gospel where the man is approached by Jesus again. This time, the man sees that Jesus is more than a prophet. He sees that Jesus is Lord and he worships Him.

Lest we forget, the Season of Lent invites us to see that Jesus is Lord and God of our lives. He is more than a miracle worker. He is more than a prophet with wisdom. He is the God of our lives!

Question

The man worshiped Jesus as Lord. In what way do I worship Jesus?

This Week's Task

This week, make an attempt to be a light for someone who is living in darkness. Consider:

- reaching out to a homebound person
- writing a letter to a person who could use comfort
- inviting a person to lunch or dinner

Group Prayer

The group leader invites the group to say the following prayer: A lighted candle may be placed on a table as the group prays this Breastplate of Saint Patrick.

Christ, as a light illumine & guide us.
Christ as a shield overshadow & cover us.
Christ be under us, Christ be over us.
Christ be beside us, on left & on right.
Christ be before us, behind us, about us.
Christ, this day, be within and without us.

The leader will then guide the group in praying Psalm 23 (from the 4th Sunday of Lent).

Psalm

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

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

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

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side With your rod and your staff that give me courage.

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

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

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

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.

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

Conclude with an OUR FATHER



Christ in Our Neighborhood

March 26, 2023

Prayer

Father,
help us to be like Christ your Son,
who loved the world and died for our salvation. Inspire
us by His love, guide us by His example, who lives
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for
ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14

As we approach the season of Easter, we
take time this weekend to reflect on the
promise of immortality.

The Prophet Ezekiel presents an awesome picture of
graves opening up and the dead rising from them.

The promise is for a restored Israel where all people will
“Know God.” We read:

“I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will
settle you upon your land; thus shall you KNOW that I
am the Lord.”

As Christians, we speak of a new Israel (a new Jerusalem)
which is heaven. Heaven is more than a place. Instead, it
is a state of being - of being one with God. To “Know
God” is to be one with God.

True life - even before we die and are raised to heaven - is
to know and live with God. As Christians, we live when
we live for God!

Question

How am I living with God now?
How am I living for God now?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 8:8-11

A question from an old Catholic Catechism goes like this:

Q: Why did God make you?

*A: God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve
Him in this world, and to be happy with
Him for ever in heaven.*

This is our purpose! We live to live for
God. In fact, if we don't live for God, then
we don't live. Our life has no purpose here
or in the world hereafter.

If we are honest, we know that we can fall
short in our desire to live for God.

Thankfully, as St. Paul reminds us in our Second
Reading, we have the Holy Spirit who lives for God in us.

The Holy Spirit is God and the Spirit finds a dwelling place
in us making it possible for us to live for God. St. Paul
writes:

“Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong
to him.”

Thankfully, this Spirit has been planted within us to live for
God - to know Him, love Him, to serve Him, and to be
happy with Him for ever in heaven.

Question

How has the Spirit of Christ moved me to know, love, and
serve God?

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5th Sunday of Lent

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Commentary

Gospel: John 11:1-45

Our Gospel today invites us to be restored to God in Christ.

Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, is resuscitated from death. The resuscitated life of Lazarus is symbolic for a restored life with God.

It is Christ who gives us the Spirit of life and restores us so that we can live - live for God!

Christ gives us this restored life here and now; not just on the last day! He says to Martha:

"I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

Now, in this story, Lazarus is resuscitated. Resuscitation is not resurrection. Eventually, Lazarus would die and be raised from the dead. However, this Gospel story today is a foretaste of the real Resurrection account of Jesus on Easter.

One day, we will all be raised from the dead and, if we live for God, we will be raised to Eternal Life. However, this does require that we respond to the Spirit of life within us who calls us to live for God here and now.

God chooses to restore us to life. Our life only has meaning if we live for God!

Question

Martha was asked by Jesus if she believed. How do I express my belief that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life?

This Week's Task

In Lent, we have an opportunity to be restored to life in Christ through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a perfect way to prepare for Easter and renew our Baptismal commitment to Christ, the Spring of living water, who washes away our sins.

Group Prayer

In preparation for Reconciliation before Easter, the leader invites the group to make a brief examination of conscience in silence. Then, the leader invites the community to say the Confiteor:

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

The leader invites the gathering to pray the psalm for the 5th Sunday of Lent.

Psalm 23

Psalm

Response: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

R:With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

R:With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

I trust in the LORD;
my soul trusts in his word.
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,
let Israel wait for the LORD.

R:With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

For with the LORD is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption;
And he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

R:With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Conclude with an OUR FATHER



Christ in Our Neighborhood

April 2, 2023

Prayer

Loving God,
you have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility. He fulfilled your will by becoming man and giving His life on the cross. Help us to bear witness to You by following his example of suffering and make us worthy to share in His resurrection. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

This passage from Isaiah is clearly pointing to the theme of this Palm Sunday. In it, we read the steadfast loyalty of a true servant of God. It reveals to the reader what the future Messiah will be for all of Israel. The Messiah (King) will be a suffering servant for the sake of God's people.

Jesus the Christ (the word means King) is the suffering servant whose fidelity to God comes with a price. As Isaiah foretells, the King of Kings does not rebel against the Father:

"I have not rebelled ... I gave my back to those who beat me ... my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting."

On this Passion Sunday, we give thanks to God who sent us his faithful Son to suffer and die for our infidelity. His death sealed for us a covenant with God that would be everlasting.

Question

Have you ever wondered why God would go through so much to become one with us and suffer for our sins? Why do you think God would do this for our world? Why would he do this for you?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

In this beautiful reading, we see the descent of the divine Word and the ascent of humanity in Jesus the Christ. In these few words, Paul delivers the mission and purpose of Jesus.

The Descent:

(1) Christ, who is in the form of God, (2) does not equate Himself with God, but (3) takes the form of a human, (4) is enslaved (5) and humbled (6) to the point of death on a cross.

The Ascent:

Because of this, God enthrones the Christ (the anointed King) and places His name (Jesus) above every other name. The humiliated one now receives genuflections and acclamations, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

This Palm Sunday reminds us that the Christ entered Jerusalem triumphantly to embrace the cross. Paul reminds us that the Christ began His journey to His Passover moment long before He entered the gates of Jerusalem. The Church reminds us that, from the first sin of Adam, the pre-existent Word of God was silently, mysteriously, and deliberately descending from the heavens to be Jesus (meaning, God Saves!)

Question

Has this Lenten period helped you to "humble" yourself or descend from your own sense of pride?

Be a part of the parish Triduum experience!

Join us for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter!

Sunday of the Lord's Passion

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Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27:66

The passion accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (also known as the synoptic gospels because of their similarities) are proclaimed in their respective cycles according to our Church calendar. Matthew's passion account is proclaimed this year (Cycle A). Mark's account will be proclaimed next year (Cycle B) and Luke's in (Cycle C) the year following.

The Gospel of John includes a passion account that differs greatly from the accounts of the synoptic gospels. For this reason, John is read each year on Good Friday.

For the most part, Matthew's account of Jesus' passion follows the Gospel of Mark. It is interesting to note that Matthew is the only evangelist who mentions Judas' suicide. Notice that Judas actually does come to see the error of his ways. He knows that he has wrongly betrayed Jesus. He is truly contrite, confesses, tries to make amends, but is unable to accept that he is worthy of grace and forgiveness. So, in an act of total desperation, he ends his life.

Despair is the opposite of the virtue of Hope. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reads:

In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end." (Catechism, 1821). We have all sinned, but we cannot despair. Hope in Christ, who came to call sinners to himself. This is the very reason why we celebrate this Holiest of Weeks!

Question

How has my Lenten Season given me hope?

This Week's Task

Make an attempt to participate in the Triduum (three great days). Join us on Holy Thursday for the Lord's Supper, the washing of the feet and Eucharistic Adoration. Join us on Good Friday for the Stations and or the Lord's Passion. Finally, join us at the Easter Vigil or on Easter morning.

Group Prayer

The leader invites each member to pass around a crucifix. Holding the cross, they offer a prayer of gratitude for the Lord's passion and death. Then, each will say the following:

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you!

The group will respond each time:

Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

The leader will then guide the group in praying Psalm 22.

Psalm

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

All who see me, scoff at me;
they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads: "He relied on the Lord;
let him deliver him,
let him rescue him, if he loves him.

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

Indeed, many dogs surround me,
a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
they have pierced my hands and my feet;
I can count all my bones.

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

They divide my garments among them,
and for my vesture they cast lots.
But you, O Lord, be not far from me;
O my help, hasten to aid me.

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

I will proclaim your name to my bretheren;
in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:
"You who fear the Lord, praise him;
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

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

Conclude with an OUR FATHER