

## Ash Wednesday

For many years I grew up loathing Lent and myself. Finally, I prayed and somehow my heart inwardly digested the first few words of Thomas Cranmer's collect for this day.

“Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent...”. This prayer from 1549, changed the idea of Lent for many during the Reformation and for me. Prior to this prayer, the Church and I, concentrated on human nature as being evil, directly in opposition to the will of God.

In the first prayer of this 40-day period, we hear that the presumption is that not only are we made in God's image, but God's presumption, and that of the Church, is that we are worthy of love. When we repent, we take those tarnished things, done and left undone, stained by sin, and return them back to God and have them exposed and cleansed in the light of His love.

We should never remain focused upon the very worst actions, behavior, or words of someone, especially ourselves and then fail to recognize that our God is continually reaching out to humanity and constantly allowing us to become the child of God we were created to be. Repentance, turning around, comes from contrition, acts of charity, fasting and prayer. These acts draw us more and more into the light of God's love and remind us that we are not the center of the world, but only an important part of His creation, that has been redeemed and, through Christ, have been made worthy stand before Him.

Sometimes it feels as if we are trapped in a box of sin and regret and yet we are not. Sometimes it's a hell of our own making, sometimes created by others, and yet we must never forget or give up believing that there, reaching into that blackness of our soul, is the God of creation, not hating, but rather loving us into being.

This Lent allow it to soak into your soul that God hates nothing God has made...especially you. Let Lent be a time when you let go of self-loathing or concentrating on some failure of yours or another's and remember that you were already known when you were being knit together in the womb and that you are both wonderfully made and loved...always!

## First Thursday in Lent

Psalm 37:1-18; Habakkuk 3:1-10; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17:1-8

“Be still before the lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret....”

Although the psalmist was directing his comments to those discouraged by the injustices which dominated the world over 3,000 years ago, I think he could easily be speaking of the world as we are experiencing it today.

I find it difficult to focus on being patient, not fretting, and waiting for the wicked to get their just due. I feel like shouting “God, it is time for you to do something”! Of course, there has always been darkness, a lack of morality, cruelty, injustice, poverty, climate destruction, abuse, violence, hatred, and the list could go on and on. I wonder “is the darkness more visible than ever and the light of God’s love is harder to see”?

As we face yet another Lenten season while experiencing the agony brought on by a pandemic, I believe we can choose to step into the light. The question for me is how? How can I share God’s love and grace with others? How can I keep from the fretting so much and turn my energy towards getting out of my cocoon and try to do something good? Perhaps we can gather in community and be creative in thinking of ways to bring the Light of Christ to others. Join me? Let’s not fret, let’s do something.

## First Friday in Lent

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.”  
(NRSV)

The whorl of dragonflies,  
upward, upward in the June morning  
above my mother's grave  
on fire, as when the sun lights a stained-glass window

upward, upward, dead.... no....not dead  
until they disperse, to spread their light  
I asked my aunt and uncle in the car...no, no one saw them  
but me

Ah, yes...still...and  
I am ...It is.... Thou art

Amen

## First Saturday in Lent

During Christ's last days on earth, He expressed His passionate desire for unity in the Church. He wanted Believers to be devoted to the Church's purpose through loving and unselfish hearts.

But the unification of the Church begins with each Believer's personal unification with God and His blessed son. Only then do we understand what true devotion means.

That intimate and life-altering experience gives us the inspiration, the confidence, and the spirit of love to fulfill Jesus's desire.

## Monday Week 1 Lent

While reading the scriptures for this first Monday in Lent, I found myself growing more agitated and annoyed. I was angry at Joseph's brothers who envied him and would eventually plot against him by selling him into slavery. I was annoyed by the petty squabbles referred to in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. And then, there was Psalm 52: 2, "Your tongue is like a sharp razor, you worker of treachery."

Why was I so bothered by things that happened thousands of years ago? Isn't this just ancient history? No, these passages described exactly what is still happening today. Our society is plagued by bitter disagreements, estrangements, petty arguments, bickering, the "nah-nah-nah" back and forth of unkind words. How can this be? Are we not commanded to love one another? This unloving attitude is a habit, a destructive habit, and not easily broken, but I will work to change my habit. I will be more mindful of my words. If I find myself wanting to reply to some snarky comment with a clever retort, I will bite my tongue and remain silent, or even better, I will respond in a spirit of love.

## **Tuesday Week 1 of Lent**

“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Do we boast? My guess is that from time-to-time we humans have gone a little overboard in describing an event or accomplishment. And, when we did boast, did we invoke the glory and wonders of the Creator? Call me silly or cynical, but I’ll bet the farm that God was included in the conversation.

We of Trinity should boast! Why? Stand in front of our church and watch the sun come up. Enter when the music is playing and read the words above the altar space. Are you not moved when, together, we recite the “Lord’s Prayer?” Or, at the conclusion of the service we hear, “Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.”

Yes, let us boast in the wonder of our faith, our Church and all the Glory of God!

## **Wednesday Week 1 of Lent**

In the Episcopal Church: the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after St. Lucy’s Day (Dec.13), Ash Wednesday, the Day of Pentecost, and Holy Cross Day (Sept.14) are Ember Days. Today is one of the Ember Days. Ember Days became known for one praying, fasting, and giving alms. Lent is a perfect time to remember the importance of these. After the reading of the psalm, the readings, and the gospel, I decided that 1 Corinthians 2:1-13 spoke to me. It was reported to Paul by a servant that in Corinth that there were two groups against each other in the church. Paul came to preach the gospel to the people of Corinth. This was because Paul knew that none of the rulers of the people of Corinth had any idea of what God had decreed before the age of glorification. Paul told them not to pay attention to people who speak to you in lofty words. He continued in saying God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. Only God knows my Spiritual needs. Worldly needs change over time. Family changes, and friends come and go. If you are lucky, one has at least really good friends. However, when it comes down to it, the only person you can rely on is God (through his Spirit). The Spirit speaks to me sometimes in mysterious ways. Sometimes I make mistakes and I say Help God! The Holy Spirit is my companion on this journey called life. I was very fortunate to be loved by one set of Grandparents and Parents. They taught me how to be the person I am today. I have grown, in knowledge of my religion, education, career, job, and retirement. I have found my responsibilities have changed as I have gotten older. Life continues to change. I have learned to live each day the best I can and say my prayers every night.

## Thursday Week 1 of Lent

The account of the life of Joseph in Genesis is one of the most remarkable biographies in all of Scripture. The story takes many twists and turns in the revelation of the Providence of God. As a young boy, Joseph is loved by his father, Jacob, more than all his other brothers. Their jealousy leads them to sell Joseph into slavery to a prominent Egyptian, Potiphar. The story picks up in today's Old Testament scripture where we see Joseph thriving as the administrator of Potiphar's house, that is until Potiphar's wife lies about Joseph and gets him thrown into a dungeon.

These last two years brought trials in my life, as they did yours. I lost my job, and I lost my father to COVID in 2020. We all lost things we took for granted: being together, sharing each other's lives, hugging and laughing, and a sense of normalcy and predictability. It is easy in such times to question God and doubt His love for us while in the midst of such trials.

How must Joseph have felt when his brothers betrayed him, sold him into slavery, and let him be taken into a foreign land away from all he held dear? How must Joseph have felt when he sat in a dungeon for two years after wrongly being accused by Potiphar's wife? We can try to put ourselves in Joseph's situations and feel what we might normally feel – anger, despair, and fear. However, we do not see Joseph express any of those things, and the reason, I believe, is in Genesis 39:2:

“The LORD was with Joseph...”

Joseph KNEW that God was with him, both in times of prosperity and in times of trial. Later in Genesis, Joseph ultimately becomes second-in-command over all of Egypt by the age of 30. The trials and triumphs of Joseph's life ultimately saved the lives of his family and led to the dramatic events told in Exodus.

Can we also believe that God is with us? If Scripture is plain on nothing else, it is that God loves us, we belong to Him, and He is working all things together for our good, just like He did with Joseph!

Lord, stir our faith this day to trust you and your plan for us, KNOWING you love us and care for us. Amen.

## Friday Week 1 of Lent

### “Leaving the Dark Tunnel”

After isolating for more than two weeks in the COVID darkness, the light can finally be seen. My husband and I have been keeping to our own sides of the house because he has never tested positive. I have tested positive twice.

Yesterday, we took the dogs for a short walk, keeping our distance from each other and other people. Today, I grabbed a spot of sunshine on the front porch and pulled my rocker into it to bask in the healing warmth. The birds chirped cheery songs. The soft breeze gently brushed against my skin. I know it smelled fresh and wonderful, but my sense of smell has yet to return.

My sense of smell will return. The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter. My morning devotions continue to remind me daily that God was and is right there with me. God is the light.

## Saturday Week 1 of Lent

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you. (New Revised Standard Version)

Pile your troubles on God’s shoulders—he’ll carry your load; he’ll help you out. (The Message)

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. (King James Version)

So, for me, this has been a time of cares. The macro-ones: grave social injustices, a pandemic, folks more focused on themselves than on all of us as a community, hidden smiles, threats to our very way of government, death alone. A startling number of my friends and family have been seriously ill. Several have died, including some way too young. My husband’s permanent ill health continues to be a challenge emotionally, physically, and spiritually. A primary source of strength to cope for me is the church. I have three churches-Trinity, St. Luke’s in Atlanta, and St. Paul’s in Selma. I often joke that I need three because I am such a successful sinner! But in these times of care and time of cares, I have needed my church community. When I first re-entered St. Luke’s, as the rules eased, I walked in like normal about 10 minutes before eight, from the back. And I wept. And I was not the only one. The space was so comforting and welcoming and the flowers and the altar linens, the lights, the smells. Sure, no communion, but surrounded by an abiding comfort. It was still strange as we had no prayer books or hymnals in the pews. Too risky! Then came the Sunday when I entered and there were the prayer books and hymnals. I wept again. And when I

walked in Trinity and when I walked in St. Paul's. God sustained me and helped me out. I will be okay; we will be okay. Thanks be to God.

## **Monday Week 2 of Lent**

I have been thinking a lot about fear. How fear can consume us and even paralyze us. This immobilization can keep us from helping others, reaching out to "scary" people and even speaking our mind when our opinions may differ from others. Silence in the face of fear darkens the world we live in.

Jesus said and did things that terrified people, even his disciples. They did not understand many of the things he said and did not even want to believe the things he said would come to pass about himself. He was constantly telling them to not be afraid and to accept that they were loved by the Father. The Romans were scary to them. People with demons were scary to them. Jesus reminded them their lives were important...and so were other people. Fear must be let go.

My age group is scared of Covid, of cancer, of breaking a bone, of not having enough money, of losing our independence, of not being needed or being a burden. We can be afraid to drive at night, of traveling overseas, of ..... you name it. We should be praying daily for us to be released from every fear that grips our lives. Help the poor, the drug addict, the unpopular. Go see the world, jump through the hoops to do something you really want to do. Maybe you will find that the best way to conquer fear is to let go and LIVE.

God's got us.

## Tuesday Week 2 of Lent

As a 70-year Episcopalian I have heard, thought, and read much about the meaning of Lent and I have always found Lent to be a time that made me look inwardly. I have given up, taken on and some years not done either. But I have always tried to look at Lent as a time of renewal, self-awareness, and time to do something, anything, to feel that I have prepared myself to deeply appreciate the glory of Easter. The Church always burst forth with spring flowers joyous hymns and a sense of rebirth. Lent more and more became a time to polish up my senses so I could see, hear, and feel more of the joy.

One of the ways I have exercised my lent was to read and seek more meaning in the prayers that so often are memorized and repeated. The Lord's Prayer, for example. Take each line of that frequently said prayer that is embedded in your memory and say only one line at a time and dwell on it for a time. What does it say and really mean to you? Jot down what comes to your mind. I have done it and read what others have said and thought I would share these thoughts with you.

Our Father, who art in heaven: Jesus cried to his Father when on the Cross. By our saying this, we are acknowledging that we are His child and we come from him, not from ourselves and we will always belong to the Father. Hallowed be thy name: We are glorifying His name forever but especially now.

Thy kingdom come: Jesus himself represents the kingdom of God on earth so we can see and know it.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We need to be raised up by Jesus to share in his divine life with hopes of eternal life. The resurrection reveals this to us. Give us this day our daily bread. This is humbling, asking for food to feed us, both physical and spiritual. The deepest hunger we have is spiritual and we must ask for that. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us: We are sinners, and we ask for forgiveness just as Jesus asked his Father to forgive us when he was on the cross! We also need to forgive others so we can be forgiven. (This isn't necessarily easy either, but a goal!) And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: Jesus was himself tempted but delivered from evil.

*If you dwell on each line for a time and draw your own meaning, the next time you repeat the Lord's Prayer, it may reach a deeper place within you. This is a sort of renewal we can all seek in gaining a closer presence with Him.*

## Wednesday Week 2 of Lent

*“ALMIGHTY God, we entrust all who are dear to us to thy never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come; knowing that thou art doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

*“OH MERCIRUL God, giver of life and health; Bless, we pray Thee, thy servant \_\_\_\_\_, and those who administer to her/him of thy healing gifts; that she/he may be restored to health of body and of mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

For more than 25 years these two prayers have been in constant use! For the past 2 years because of today's world, I have said these prayers at least twice daily. Both are from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and became memorized with no effort.... just by frequent use.

The first is short and to the point with a beautiful request for “*thy never-failing care and love*” and can include many “*ALL who are dear to us*”. They will be the recipients of “*better things*” than we can desire or pray for. We couldn’t ask for more.

In the second prayer, few words have such power and beauty. First, we acknowledge the creator of life and health, then ask for blessings not for ourselves but for others and for those who “*administer thy healing gifts*”, the caregivers.

Both these prayers are perfectly expressed. Sometimes I include a prayer at the end with a personal request for

myself asking “*Forgive us all that is past*” so I can move on to “Today”.

## Thursday Week 2 of Lent

I am a Muslim and was honored when your priest asked me to write a reflection for your Holy Season of Lent. I thought Fr. Eric was kidding but then he told me about Lent, with fasting and prayer and doing good works. It reminds me of Ramadan.

All I knew of Jesus is what I hear in popular culture and the Qur'an. Jesus and Mary are mentioned many times in the Qur'an. Fr. Eric gave me a Bible and I read the Gospel of Mark and it was extremely interesting. I asked Alexa how many times the word "immediately" is used in that book of the Bible. Alexa told me 40. Everything happens so fast in those short 16 chapters.

Does your God always act immediately? Mine doesn't and we worship the same one from what I know ---the God of Abraham.

In my life I rarely see God act immediately. It is only long after an event where I see that Allah has had his hand in things involving my life. Is it that way for Christians too?

I called Fr. Eric and asked him about this "immediate" thing, and he said it was just in the Gospel of Mark. Then I began reading the Gospel of John--- so different. I like your Bible, don't understand a lot of it, but if all Christians are like you at Trinity perhaps the world is becoming a better place, but not quite as immediately as we would all like.

I have a new-found respect for Christianity and you Episcopalians in and of Apalachicola. Thank you for

showing me the need for immediacy in our shared ministries and culture.

## Friday Week 2 of Lent

I recently joined a group online called “View from my window”. People all over the world send one photograph from a window in their home. No people in the photo, sometimes a wild creature or a pet may appear, but mostly just what they see from their windows. It is truly a mind-opener to see the different places that represent the perspective that those people have. Often there is a small paragraph about why they are living there or why that view is so special to them. It is way of reaching out

What I have learned ...again....is how important our home and what we “see” each day impacts our lives. We all want safety and security, and we all seek beauty even on a stormy or wintery day. We wish for human beings to be safe. We are all weary of the pandemic. The words of courage spoken to complete strangers in the safety of the online platform should be a model of how we speak to each other on a daily basis.

Instead of answering “fine” or “okay” when we are neither, why not answer, “I am lonesome” or “I am at loose ends today.”? I truly am “fine”, but I do miss the noise of others. The chatter and the latest goings on in a community end when you retire, and you are in the middle of the pandemic that won’t stop. Today I pray that when I do venture out and someone answers me, “I’m fine” that I answer with a little more than, “Me, too.” It’s a start. We all need each other.

## Saturday Week 2 of Lent

Raised as a white, middle-class girl in the 1940’s, I was held to a level of lady-like decorum. Don’t call attention to yourself, don’t speak unless spoken to and most importantly don’t shout. While I too often stepped beyond these expectations, they helped mold and shape my behavior. The blind beggar Bartimaeus, however, recognizes no such limits. Hearing of Jesus’ arrival, he shouts, “Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me!” Shocked by his loud impropriety, the crowd orders him to be silent. Bartimaeus yells still louder, until he captures the attention of Jesus. Because he voices his need, Jesus recognizes him, and restores sight to Bartimaeus.

What an important lesson, especially during Lenten season, this time for quiet reflection and sober contemplation. Yet Lent particularly asks us to acknowledge our failures, to recognize how deep is our need for God’s intervention. We too are spiritually blind, slow to voice our sins, whispering we need forgiveness. Covid forced us to live in isolation, our lives muted and still. Perhaps we have forgotten how we must honestly self-examine, own our failures, yell our demands to be heard. Like Bartimaeus we desperately need Jesus in our lives. Bartimaeus first acknowledges who Jesus is, and then shouts for help until he is healed... I pray during this Lenten season I too will recognize who Jesus is and how vital is my need to be forgiven. Let me, along with Bartimaeus, shout, “Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me.”

## Monday Week 3 of Lent

Among my favorite Gospel passages is one of the readings for today: Mark 5:21-43. In this reading, a woman, having been sick for 12 years, touched Jesus's clothes. Jesus looked around to see who had touched him and the woman confessed, trembling with fear. But Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Every time I read this part of Scripture, I think of someone I met several years ago while we were both undergoing daily radiation treatments. I saw her every morning, a colorful, attractive African American lady with bright red hair and zebra-striped jackets or other colorful garb. We always chatted amiably until the receptionist announced it was time for us individually to go back for treatment. At that point, patients moved back to the "sub-waiting room". There were usually 6 or 7 of us in the coed sub-waiting room, some chatty, some visibly sick, some engrossed in their laptops and smart phones. One morning, I was wondering what had happened to Rita and looked up to see someone smiling at me whom I didn't recognize. She had no hair and appeared weak and thin in her hospital gown. But when she spoke, I knew it was Rita. "Honey, you don't recognize me without my costume, do you? Tomorrow I'll probably look even different—you watch. Rita doesn't go out into her public without her wig and fancy clothes. It's what's expected of me, and I wouldn't have it any different. You got to be brave in this life. You got to put your best foot forward. You got to be hopeful and upbeat; you got to believe in a good God. I ain't no different in this hospital gown than I

am in my fancy duds, so you look at me and smile and don't treat me no different in this waiting room than the other."

And I imagine the brave Rita touching the robe of Jesus and Jesus repeating, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in Peace...." I pray that she is well.

## Tuesday Week 3 of Lent

### Genesis 45:1-15

Forgiveness: For it was not you, my brothers, who sold me into slavery, but it was the Will of God that I came to Egypt to save the people from famine. Great things come to those who do not dwell on resentment and despair. Do not dwell on your past actions but see what has become of me and this place which God has made Good for you. Go tell my father of all the Good and forgive yourselves as I have forgiven you.

### Corinthians 7:32-40

Don't stress about chastity and married life: Those who stay focused on the Lord will prosper in God even in living a worldly life. Those who are married [which I interpret as being in a carnal relationship], even a passionate marriage, will "do well." But unmarried folks [chaste persons] will "do better" since one's focus is solely on the Lord—like a monk. And if one becomes a widow, it is all right to "remarry" as long as the Lord comes first.

### Mark 6:1-13

Familiarity breeds contempt: Jesus was not accepted or heard since the people of his country knew him form before—their perception was limited to past impressions of Jesus as common man. So not much teaching work (teaching) was done with the people of his country. Jesus sent out his disciples as mendicants who had been given the power of His Love to heal and teach. Jesus told them if they were not accepted to "shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them." The disciples did the work, and many benefited as Jesus had instructed them to stand up for themselves by disparaging those who would not accept them.

## Wednesday week 3 of Lent

“For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

Giving food to idols is actually useless, because it is impossible to bargain with gods. It is better to give food to hungry people – to be kind.

My Daddy raised a sceptic, so I have never been sure what I believed about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit. But I know that for years I felt lost, a kind of deep hopelessness. What is it all about anyway? Why am I here, and what am I supposed to be doing? So, I started seeking.

First was Meditation in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. I never felt that I got very good at it, but one evening I had a strange experience. I was sitting in my living room when suddenly I felt swept up into a huge cold dark void, as if I were falling, and I was helpless to move. At first, I was frightened but found myself saying to myself, “Well, if it is a great void then there is no bottom, so what are you scared of?” Instantly I felt warm and comfortable. But then I thought to myself, “Why does it have to be so dark?” And instantly there was this huge all-encompassing light, kind of blinding, but comfortable at the same time.

Gradually I became aware of a presence, not a face exactly, but it was looking at me from inside the huge light, and I was in the light looking back at it. We were together looking down at my body sitting motionless in my living room. Then a quiet voice in my mind said “Well, that body is a pretty good one. Let’s keep using it for a while.” And

Poof! I was back in my body in my living room, still kind of wondering what I was supposed to be doing, but not afraid or feeling lost any more.

So, if people want to have many gods that is OK because all gods come out of that vast light, and those gods know the people’s hearts. But I am sticking to the tradition into which I was born: Christianity, and to Jesus’ fundamental teaching to be kind.

## Thursday Week 3 of Lent

The Beginning..... Imagine, "The Beginning", God brought everything into being. I pondered on this thought, one tends to relate to the beginning as the beginning of their day asking, "What needs to be done today?". In the beginning God created everything. What a busy day he had.

One shall pursue their service to folks with no expectations of monetary gain. I reflect strongly on the present Covid-19 situation. Healthcare professionals and scientists have researched and presented scientific data to everyone. This information shall be used by everyone to make sound educated decisions on protecting themselves and their neighbors from Covid-19 health events. These professionals are serving for the good of others. Paul received much inward pleasure, joy, and satisfaction, as did these professionals educating their families, friends and neighbors. "Keep watch over my life, for I am faithful: save your servant who puts his trust in you." Psalm 86:2

Everyone is familiar with how Jesus feeds the five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. A total miracle in today's world. Then Jesus goes up on a mountain to pray. We can appreciate the need for Jesus to have some "downtime" from the very busy day. We all should follow Jesus' action of taking time to reflect and center ourselves. During the Lenten season is a great opportunity to spend some "downtime" with Jesus and to center ourselves.

God Bless and keep you safe and centered.

## Friday week 3 of Lent

Each year during the Lenten season I find myself wondering what it would be like for Jesus to continue performing miraculous feats knowing full well what was waiting for him in Jerusalem in the not-too-distant future. In the reading from Mark, we find the all too familiar story of "walking on the water." In the verses leading up to the story he had just fed five thousand people with a couple loaves of bread and purposefully sent the disciples on ahead in a boat. He must have known that to get back with them he would have to take a supernatural hike. Mark tells us that he wasn't planning to get into the boat but the disciples were so afraid that he went to comfort them and then calmed the sea; and that they were utterly astounded for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. How does a heart get hardened? Are our hearts hardened? Is it something that just happens, perhaps from fear? Perhaps it is a decision. How could the disciples who saw the people fed, Jesus walking on the water, and all the sick people who could touch him being healed not make the choice to let their hearts be completely open and compassionate. How can we, knowing all the stories about how God cares for us all and showers the world with everything necessary for abundant life not chose to open our hearts.

## Saturday Week 3 of Lent

I have always been so baffled by the concept that God will never give you more than you can bear. 1 Corinthians 10:13 "God is so faithful; he will never let you be tested beyond what you can bear." I can think of many circumstances that would push me over the edge and cause me to hysterically run screaming out the door. My faith is so shallow. Lent is my trial period on a much smaller scale, to prepare for just such a time. By adding or subtracting something from my daily life I realize that God, in this small way, does get me through this 40 day waiting time. God tests us in so many ways. Lent is a way of testing ourselves. We practice daily seeking God's guidance to get us through. And it works! It also works to seek out friends who love God and have experienced the same test. Discover how God helped them and learn from that. A Lenten sacrifice helps me learn that God will get me through. At the end of this period, I will feel more closely the presence of God.

## Monday week 4 of Lent

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

*The Gospel according to John: Chapter 16, verse 33 (KJV)*

I have loved this Bible verse since first I read it many years ago. Its meaning, for me, was powerful then; but oh how that meaning has grown and blossomed for me, and within me, over the years. So very much is being said in this short passage. And, no doubt, the message and meaning are unique for each of us. For me though Jesus's words say so much about so many things:

Who was Jesus?

Who is He to me?

What promises did He make?

What did He mean by, "I have overcome the world."

All these and more are questions each of us can and should ask. Your questions and answers are your own; personal, private and deeply meaningful. Ask yourself though, how do these words, these thoughts, these messages touch and affect you and your life today. Jesus spoke these words almost 2000 years ago yet, here in 2022 the thoughts they express, the lessons they teach are just as poignant, just as meaningful - if not more so - in today's world. What exactly did Jesus say? What did He mean? What did He want His disciples to hear, and how did He want them to react to His words? The following are merely some thoughts for consideration.

Taken at face value Jesus's speech to His disciples is an encouraging and comforting invocation. A re-confirmation to them that Jesus (God) is with them always. Especially during the trying time ahead for them on earth. And Jesus's last line (perhaps my favorite), "...but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." could be taken as a statement that He, Jesus the divine being, has risen – both figuratively and literally – above this earth and all of its cruelty, imperfection and sinfulness.

All of this is quite true, quite accurate. But there is so much more in what Jesus says. His words are not just about Himself at that particular point in time. They are words of guidance and truth about us all, throughout all time, as we navigate life in this oh so imperfect world.

We are all of us disciples, but are we not also apostles? As apostles it is our responsibility to speak and live these words of the Son of Man.

## **Tuesday Week 4 of Lent**

Lent is the beginning of our Spiritual New Year. Just as we make promises and resolutions on New Year's Day, Lent is a time for spiritual resolutions and re-evaluation of our lives. It is a time to pray, fast, seek forgiveness, and ask God about his mission for us. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul wrote of coming together in the church for the right reason. He also wrote of not creating divisions in the Church among ourselves. There have been times that I have gone to Church upset. During the service, my mind was on everything but the sermon. (Anyone who has raised a teenage grandchild can relate). After the service, I would question why I did not just stay at home. I was there for the wrong reason. There have been other times when I had witnessed divisions in the church but did not do anything to make things better.

Both Mark 8:1-10 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, speak of feeding the physical body. Lent is about feeding the spirit. Forty days of fasting, praying, and vowing to do better should give us enough time to break unpleasant habits like going to church for the wrong reason or not making peace within the church. But we are human and will always have to do self-renewal of our lives. By letting go of baggage that had been weighing us down we can now feel a new spirit of renewal that will allow us to praise and worship Him without any inhibitions. This is a time to reflect and pray for a bigger calling that Jesus may have for us.

## Wednesday, Week 4

Today's reading from I Corinthians resonates with me these days, as I attempt to pay closer attention to others with whom I come in contact. Whether friends, new acquaintances, or random strangers at the grocery store, I am mindful that anyone can make or break my day.

Rude behavior becomes not simply an affront that angers me; it can be a lesson that hurtful comments are just that, and I need to check myself from issuing them to others. On the other hand, a musician's performance can fill me with wonder and joy, inspiring me to find my best self and share it with others.

We all have spiritual gifts that, whether we realize it or not, we share constantly through our words and actions. Let each of us be open in giving a caring smile or a helping hand, as well as acknowledge, reflect, and learn from a brusque reaction. Are we bringing our best gifts to this party of life?

## Thursday Week 4 of Lent

Lenten Musings – What is the purpose of Lent? How do we use Lent as a part of the Liturgy of Easter?

First, what does Lent represent and what do we need to do to learn and benefit from it? Lent is an important part of our worship leading up to the celebration of Easter. The word Lent is derived from the Middle English, *lengthe*; it represents the lengthening of days at that part of the year. It is also the time when we reflect upon Jesus' wandering in the wilderness – a 40-day ordeal that was part of the savior's sacrifice.

This gives us the time to appreciate how this sacrifice tells us what we are to consider and how we should strive to emulate Christ in developing our sacrifice; to inform us, in some small way, of the sacrifice in which we may share.

## Friday week 4 of Lent

In his transfiguration story, Mark emphasizes the prophetic nature of Jesus' ministry. The prophet Elijah is mentioned first, and last in the passage, which differs from the accounts of Matthew and Luke. Elijah was the prophet of Yahweh who famously defeated the Tyrian Baal gods in a fiery contest on Mount Carmel. Similarly, some scholars suggest that Mark's account points toward Jesus' "cleansing" of the Temple at Jerusalem, where moneychangers almost certainly handled Tyrian-minted coins with an image of Baal Melkart imposed on the head of Hercules. The themes of "no other gods before me" and "no graven images" are also part of the story of Moses who received God's commandments on another mountain, Sinai, and who met with Jesus and Elijah on the "high mount" of transfiguration.

The Son of Man (Mark's favored phrase for Jesus) is the prophet-like-Elijah advocating for the one God, Yahweh, over the many gods of the ancient pagan world. For Mark, securing the preeminence of God the Father is important for establishing the significance (even perhaps, the possibility) of Jesus as Son. So, in Mark's transfiguration, God can proclaim Jesus Son, but for Jesus and his disciples, this fact is still difficult to fully grasp. In Mark, we see Jesus (repeatedly) telling his disciples to keep the knowledge of his Messianic identity to themselves.

While Jesus' own struggle has always been heartening to me because I embrace the early Church creeds that pronounce Jesus as "fully God" and "fully man"—and because I am acquainted with struggle myself—I think that something else

about Jesus (and God) is evident in the Messianic secret Mark wants to keep. Namely, that Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God was not only capable of prophetic anger but also of humility, kindness and self-forgetfulness. Unlike the gratuitously proud and jealous pagan gods of Babylon and later, Rome, the Jesus of the gospels was not boastful or envious. Such are the enduring qualities of divine love (agape) that the epistle to the Corinthians also celebrates. Even prophetic powers, special knowledge and faith "so as to remove mountains," Paul writes, are nothing without love.

Quite dramatically and also ironically, Jesus' transfiguration marks an end to His ministry in Galilee, and the beginning of His journey to Jerusalem and the Cross.

## Saturday week 4 of Lent

This meditation is by way of pulling a thread through scripture and our tradition. I was struck by two lines from today's readings: "Here I am," Moses responds to the God he meets in the burning bush. "I believe; help my unbelief!" exclaims the father in Mark's gospel who begs Jesus to heal his son. I was reminded by those statements of a saying I learned from the Quaker teacher Parker Palmer, "the way opens." So, I googled that saying and found Philip Gulley's writings on five short, pithy Quaker wisdom sayings, including that one. I will simply list them, and you can follow as you will. Maybe your heart, mind, and imagination will be caught by one or more of them. And just a personal note on #5, the one with which I'm most familiar. I've always thought of it as reminding me that I am held in grace, that there is a way forward. But the word *proceed* in front adds a dose of discernment, an understanding that some doors don't open, some paths aren't meant to be taken. And that God is with us in both the opening and the closing, and the in-between, the waiting. Let your life preach (*to others*). Let your life speak (*to yourself*). Live up to the light you have and more will be given you. Walk cheerfully over all the world, answering that of God in all persons. Proceed as the way opens. And for more inspiration, visit <http://philipgulley.com> and <http://courageousnewbeginnings.org/> wpccr/parker.

## Monday week 5 of Lent

" Covid Times"

Since Lent is traditionally a time for reflection, I decided to do so (not that we should restrict reflecting only at Lent). The current pandemic has/is altering the way we live, think, and act. There are both positives and negatives about this. Hopefully, we can all learn and profit by these experiences. However, bear in mind that it is not over yet.

First, the negatives - I fear becoming ill from the virus. I fear for my family, friends, and neighbors contracting the virus. I dislike having to wear a mask for long periods of time and doing social distancing. I wonder about who has been vaccinated and who has not. I hate dealing with all the misinformation and disinformation regarding the virus, vaccinations, etc. I must deal with the great numbers of folks who have severe cases of the virus or have died because of the virus.

And then there are the positives - We have approved vaccines that are available to us at no cost. We have an incredible medical community that cares for those with the virus (doctors, nurses, scientists, EMTs, etc. The virus has caused me to realize just how blessed I, and my family, are to be healthy and vaccinated. Covid times have caused me to think more deeply about my religious life and my relationship with God. In times like these, it seems like people are more willing to help those in need. There is ZOOM which enables us to see and communicate with others at a safe distance. These sessions help to make up for some of our loss of community and fellowship.

I found this terrific prayer on the Internet and want to share it with others:

" Dear Lord, we ask that you give us open minds and open hearts. Fill us with a willingness for unity. Fill us with love for those most like us and for those who are least like us. Bring healing to our land. Help us to bring the peace that passes all understanding. Amen".

How often have you known someone; a relative, a loved one, and yes, even a stranger who could benefit so very much from the comfort and wisdom of this message? We are all of us capable of speaking words of comfort and peace. We are also, all of us, quite aware that this world, this corporeal life we are living, holds tribulation.

Indeed, it sometimes seems as though most of the life is tribulation. There is no question that this world contains an abundance of sorrow, of pain, of tribulation. But what we must always remember and believe with all our hearts is that we have the ability, the power to "overcome the world." This is what Jesus was trying to teach his disciples, and us. We all of us can, should and must "overcome the world."

Every day we must "overcome the world." by not allowing the world to overcome us. We must not allow, both the large and the small "tribulations" of life to overcome us. When Jesus said to his disciples, "...I have overcome the world." He was speaking of both His divine self and also His human self. This was the part of the message that was so very important for His disciples and for us to hear.

In the same gospel (John), Jesus admonishes his disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18 KJV). This is one of the greatest and saddest truths of life. Think for a moment what Jesus is saying, what this really means. If someone hates you, discriminates against you, unfairly judges you because of your beliefs, your religion, your race, your gender, the color of your skin; then they are discriminating, judging, hating Jesus too.

How many people, who consider themselves Christians, have thought about this before hurling their hate and judgement at those who are their brothers and sisters.

This; this hatred and ill will are part of the "tribulations" Jesus spoke of. And they are also an inexorable part of the world that we must live in and "overcome." Yes, when Jesus spoke these words almost 2000 years ago, He was speaking to His disciples of that moment, their lives then. But He was also speaking across time, across the ages. All that had passed and all that was to come. This was the world He spoke of overcoming and it is this world that we must overcome every day of our lives.

It is also in the Gospel of John that we find Jesus speaking to us of something so simple, so basic yet so hard to find and retain: "These things I command you, that ye love one another." (John 15:17 KJV). And so, perhaps it is the hatred we find in others and within ourselves that we should and must strive to "overcome."

## Tuesday Week 5 of Lent

So here we are just about done with Lent. I hear we might have coffee hour on Easter. That's the best news I've heard in two years.

March 18, 2020 we the world shut down and nothing has been the same ever since. I don't usually hug or go to coffee hour but after two years in this desert, I'd like some dessert.

I don't need cake or cookies, I need smiles. Laughter and hugs. As a widow, my life has been so empty these last few years and as one who is elderly, I've shied away from church because of covid.

I remember as a child wearing an Easter Bonnet with a butterfly on it. My father said it was extremely expensive and it was, after all it was during World War II. My father told me the butterfly represented the resurrection of Jesus, transforming from his earthly body to his heavenly body. I never understood it as a child; yet, now as I approach my nineties, I do hope.

Lent always prepares me for that butterfly of Easter morning and I hope that this life has prepared me for my own heavenly body. All I know is that without Trinity this old body would never have obtain a spiritual body and I miss you all so much. Go away COVID and let a new Easter come without masks, social distancing and fear. I want to live while I'm still living.

## Wednesday week 5 of Lent

The readings for today are both comforting and troubling to me.

2 Corinthians 3:6 {Christ} "Who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Mark 10:25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Mark 10:31 "But many that are first, shall be last, and the last first."

For me and many Episcopalians, the thought that it's difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, has always been troubling. Even though I've been told that the Eye of the Needle is one of the gates into old Jerusalem, the message was frightening. It is possible for a camel to pass through the gate, but the camel may have to "bend the knee." The other verse from the reading in Mark, "But many that are first, shall be last, and the last first," begins to give me comfort. I think the message is: Be humble. There's a wonderful tradition at Emory Law School graduation. The first in the class is the last to enter for the ceremony. By being humble, we don't think of ourselves first or where we fit in society but are grateful for God's blessing.

The other reading from Corinthians encourages us to be ministers of the New Testament "not of the letter, but of the spirit." I remember hearing my grandmother speak of

someone being “nasty-nice.” I remember asking her, what does “nasty-nice” mean? She told me that someone who is nasty-nice has the form of courtesy, but not the substance. Another way of understanding the reading for me is to remember in a courtroom, the judge is not bound by the letter of the law, but by the spirit.

So, the message today is “Be humble as you walk with God.”

## Thursday Week 5 of Lent

“Hardened heart.” What a stark descriptor this is for Pharaoh who rejects God’s bidding to “Let my people go.” Instead, he allows plague after plague to descend upon his kingdom. Paul also identifies those who refuse to embrace the supernal glory of Christ as people who have hardened their hearts.

In keeping with Lent as a penitential season, we should seek ways to unlock our hardened hearts and open ourselves to the transformative nature of Easter People. In Mark’s gospel, Christ shows the way by extending the promise of eternal life, the ultimate freedom. But he warns that the cost is dear. He presses us to give God priority over our worldly connections. “How hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God!”, Jesus says.

After suffering through two years of the pandemic ourselves, it seems that Pharaoh’s choice would have been an easy one. What Paul and Jesus propose is more difficult. How do we move from incompleteness to wholeness, from veiled knowledge to life-changing discernment? Perhaps practicing mindfulness is a start. Perhaps answering a call to a new ministry will allow a necessary self-expansion. Perhaps making personal sacrifices for the sake of the collective good can teach us humility and generosity. Freedom from plagues, from hardened hearts, from the lure of earthly pleasures will only be ours when we believe what God tells us, when we give credence to the import of the unveiled glory of Christ, and when we are willing to make the ultimate sacrifices that Christ requires.

## Friday week 5 of Lent

“Astonished” and “afraid.” As they walk from Judea to Jerusalem, following Jesus, the disciples are astonished! The rest of the followers, we are told, are afraid. Even after all the miracles they have witnessed, the disciples are still amazed by the powerful presence of Jesus. Other followers, not yet acclimated to his divine energy, are fearful, perhaps, of his inexplicable, magnetic power to draw them in. How I can relate! My relationship with Jesus is one of great intensity and curiosity; a push-me-pull-you kind of dance between my head and my heart. My rational brain wants proof that Jesus is who scripture says he is and that following him will lead somewhere. My ego tells me I will be some kind of freak if I fall in line with Christian doctrine. It’s much safer to be SBNR (spiritual but not religious); if I could stay there, I would.

But it is not in my head where I experience Jesus; it is in my heart. And it is there that his magnetic energy resonates. Astonished and afraid, I cannot help but answer the call to follow, to seek, to serve. As I walk to Jerusalem, again and again, I continue to be astonished, and every year, a little less afraid.

## Saturday Week 5 of Lent

Raised as a white, middle-class girl in the 1940’s, I was held to a level of lady-like decorum. Don’t call attention to yourself, don’t speak unless spoken to and most importantly don’t shout. While I too often stepped beyond these expectations, they helped mold and shaped my behavior. The blind beggar Bartimaeus, however, recognizes no such limits. Hearing of Jesus’ arrival, he shouts, “Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me!” Shocked by his loud impropriety, the crowd orders him to be silent. Bartimaeus yells still louder, until he captures the attention of Jesus. Because he voices his need, Jesus recognizes him, and restores sight to Bartimaeus.

What an important lesson, especially during Lenten season, this time for quiet reflection and sober contemplation. Yet Lent particularly asks us to acknowledge our failures, to recognize how deep is our need for God’s intervention. We too are spiritually blind, slow to voice our sins, whispering we need forgiveness. Covid forced us to live in isolation, our lives muted and still. Perhaps we have forgotten how we must honestly self-examine, own our failures, yell our demands to be heard. Like Bartimaeus we desperately need Jesus in our lives. Bartimaeus first acknowledges who Jesus is, and then shouts for help until he is healed. I pray during this Lenten season I too will recognize who Jesus is and how vital is my need to be forgiven. Let me, along with Bartimaeus, shout, “Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me.”

## Monday of Holy Week

“I put a spell on you, because you’re mine,” sang “Screamin’ Jay” Hawkins in his 1956 single, recognized as one of 500 songs that shaped rock & roll. In today’s gospel, Jesus cursed a fig tree so no one would eat its figs again. Seriously? Jesus put a spell on a *tree*? Was it *spite*? My uncle told me when I was a kid that I would argue with a signpost, so I guess it’s no surprise that I’m arguing with Jesus about figs.

In trying to understand this story I’ve learned more about figs than I’d ever cared to know - that the tree is the last to leaf out in spring, that the leaves come in March, followed by figs in May or June, sometimes with a second fruit harvest. And I learned that the fig tree is often used as a symbol of abundance in Scripture, and even as a metaphor for the flourishing of the people of Israel.

By cursing the tree, Jesus is saying symbolically that Israel will wither rather than prosper. The story bookends Jesus’ cleansing of the temple - Jesus curses the tree before he visits the temple, and then Peter sees that the tree has withered to its roots the day after. Jesus’ anger at the tree is paralleled by his anger at the corruption that had crept into temple worship.

There’s a similar story in Luke’s gospel (13: 6-9), where the landowner wants to cut a figtree down since it hasn’t borne fruit in three years, but his manager asks that he give the tree a chance - let me fertilize it and give it a year

to bear fruit, he says, before you cut it down. To me, the story in Luke seems fairer than this one.

So, what’s the meaning here? I’m not sure, but I can imagine that Jesus is sharing with us a way to God without the trappings of sacrifice and intermediaries. Jesus came not only to his own people, but to all God’s people.

Tuesday of Holy Week

LENT IS about LOVE.

I was confirmed at age 10, (the youngest ever in my church.) My entire family was confirmed at the same time & went through confirmation classes together. I listened intently to the confirmation class information and took everything very seriously. My first Lent arrived, and I remember deciding what to 'give up' for Lent. I decided on Pickles.

My mother asked what my Lenten plan was and when I told her she said, "but you don't really like pickles". Of course not, I figured that would make it easier to succeed and not be so hard on me. I did NOT want to fail. She explained that it was not so much about the 'rules' but a covenant between me and God and not so much about performance but about perseverance through love. SO much for just following the rules to get into Heaven. Christian faith is more about LOVE than rules. Love for God your Father, love for yourself as his child and love for your neighbor.

Since those early years I have alternated between 'giving something up' and 'taking something on' so that Lent isn't always about self-sacrifice but also about doing something positive. This Pandemic has kept me at home most of the time, but I have sought out the positive and tried to make sure that every single day I find something positive for which to be grateful. I have found peace in the positive. I pray out loud more often, I seek and enjoy the nature around me more, and I try to stay more in touch with loved ones by phone, letter, or email. I do miss my church community and look forward to the day we can worship together and share the

sacrament of Holy Communion together again. Until then I will dwell on the LOVE in Jesus Christ at this special time of his suffering, death then glorious resurrection, remembering Lent is about Love.

## Wednesday of Holy Week

I think a lot about what the definition of Church is and why any of us flock to a building. I have been to many buildings in my lifetime. Four were Roman Catholic and one has been Episcopalian. All of them were filled with special people and all bring back many memories. A few of the priests stand out in my memory, too. A couple were gifted speakers and scholars. Others were cast in their role and tried very hard to live up to the title. One used to really “wing it” and he did it spectacularly niggling us to be better people. He annoyed some and thrilled others!

Every church has its “regular seat people”, its traditions and its history. We like to say that Trinity has “prayer-soaked walls.” I like that because it reminds me of all the hundreds (thousands?) of people that have flocked to this “big white Church” for solace, celebration, learning, praying, grieving, and greeting.

I remember where certain people “always” sat. I remember laughing with a fellow “ex” over how to do the beautiful altar correctly.... knowing someone would bail us out if we erred. I remember a wedding while a storm was toying with us out in the Gulf...and Trinity was filled with laughter and joy! I remember seeing my daughters walk down the aisle. I remember the spontaneous coming together at the Church on 9/11. No need to send out a message. We knew where to come to be together.

So, yes, this old building is special but not more special than the lives of those who have flocked here. Nor is it more special than the work done outside of the building to those in

need or despair... not just in this community but in the world community. Is it time for us to grow and fill this place with people who need us and who we so desperately need as well?

Is it time for you to tell someone, “Come on in!” as someone did to me so many years ago? I add this prayer to our “prayer- soaked walls” this Lenten season. The big white Church is us.

## Maundy Thursday

Today's appointed scriptures offer little in the way of hope and encouragement, as one might expect for a Maundy Thursday theme. In Lamentations, Jeremiah the prophet expresses God's anger at Judah, the remnant of His chosen people, after the destruction of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon. In Mark, we see Jesus celebrating the Passover with his disciples and predicting betrayal by one of them. And finally, we read Paul's admonishment to the Corinthians as they struggle with idolatry in the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

In reading these passages, my thoughts turned to all the divisions we have in our world today – divisions between nations, between political establishments and states in our own country, between rural and urban communities, between races, within our own small town, within our personal families, and within the Church.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 10:16-17:

*"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."*

The unity we have in Christ is supposed to be so much greater than the petty matters we choose to let divide us. We treat each other terribly at times and betray one another with our words and actions. We do so to our shame and the ridicule of those around us who, though they may not know Christ, often love each other better than we.

As we come to the close of Lenten season, may we all examine our hearts, repent of our sins toward others, mend our broken relationships, and draw closer to one another again in Christ. We need one another, and the things that we have in common are stronger and more important than the things that divide us.

Lord, shower us with your grace and mercy that we may love others as you love us. Amen.

## Good Friday

I'm tired of being blamed for killing Jesus! If it has been said once, it has been said a thousand times.

I'm a male Jew who lives in Franklin County and from what I've learned it was Pilate and a mob like the one that overran the Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup> who killed the Anointed One! But according to the Gospel of John, Jesus was very much in charge of his own fate –even though the crowd probably had some influence over Pilate. Pilate washed his hands if I remember correctly and let the mob have Jesus. Vice President Pence (whether you like him or not) did not succumb to the will of the mob and did his job. Had Pilate been more like Pence perhaps Jesus would have lived to a ripe old age. Perhaps like Buddha, living in the world but unsoiled by it.

It's so easy to get wrapped up in a mob mentality and to blame others for our own shortcomings. We are witnessing that now in our country. I have done it myself and have regretted my behavior. As a young man in high school, I got in fight with a bunch of Christians after a football game. They had called the Jews some terrible names and I, along with a group of friends, decided to fight. I'd have never done this alone. All of us were suspended for three days.

Three days, isn't that interesting?

What I'm trying to say is that I think God's plan for Jesus was like that of Moses, that he would live a long life. In that long life, he could change the world, but human beings and human cliques, and human emotions got riled up that day

and the one who was to save the world had the world turn against him.

Maybe it wasn't Pilate, the Romans, or the Jews that killed Jesus, perhaps what happened on that dark day was that human nature was revealed and perhaps we should study that option before we open our mouths or act out.

I want to thank Father Eric for letting me contribute to this booklet and especially for assigning me this day. May you all have a joyous Easter.

## Holy Saturday

What are you doing today? Are you and yours preparing for a big dinner and guests tomorrow? Have you picked out your Easter hat and dress? As I write this, I'm hoping that masks may be a thing of the past and gatherings of families may be Covid-free tomorrow. I'm looking forward to Easter, but it's still not here. Not yet. Jesus is cold, stiff, and rotting. He is alone and dead in the grave, and we are called to mourn the death of our Savior.

Today, Jesus is dead! The Messiah failed. The Anointed One didn't save the world. Yesterday was the day when God's only begotten Son was forsaken by His Father in heaven. Today hope is lost, and despair fills the world. And the disciples are in hiding.

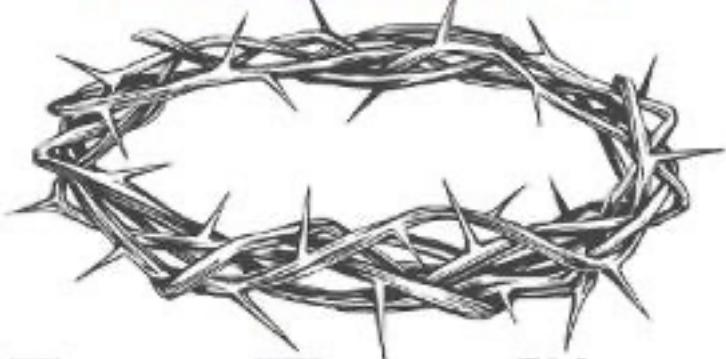
Today we are to make our trip collectively or individually to the grave ---if we have been living out Holy Week and Lent. Today the world feels the absence of both God the Father and the Son. It is a dark, dark day. It is a time for mourning, grief and wailing.

Today is the day to stand at an empty, bloodied cross and proceed to a borrowed grave near the town dump. Today we stand at Christ's grave and wonder how we let this happen. It's a day to wear sackcloth and ashes. It's truly a day to repent.

Today, this day when Christ's body lies in the grave, we must live in both the doubt and promise of the Resurrection. If you have ever visited the cemetery the day after a loved one has been buried, you know the disbelief and the loss of

hope. Today is that day for the world to stand in shock, horror, despair, and fear. This is where we live...today!

# Prepare Your Heart



Pray. Fast. Give.

## Introduction

On Ash Wednesday, I will, in the name of the Church, invite you to, “the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.” This booklet is Trinity’s 2022 offering to encourage you to take on the refection of Scripture as part of your Lenten discipline.

The writers, who are Christians, Agnostics, Jews, and Muslims have used the Scripture appointed for each day in the Daily Office (Year 2 BCP beginning on page 951) as the basis for the meditations in this booklet. Some folks read the Scripture yet chose to write strictly what they were feeling as we progress through this Great Pause of COVID-19.

To familiarize each of us with the BCP and the Bible, the lessons are NOT listed before each meditation. You are asked to look in your Book of Common prayer and then find the passage in your Bible.

If you make time to read God’s Word in a prayerful way, we expect that, because we are each unique, from different backgrounds, with different needs, at different places in our spiritual lives, the Lord will speak to you in a somewhat different manner than how the author was inspired...and that’s a good thing.

It is our hope that as you use this booklet throughout Lent, it will bring you to experience that Holy Lent, to which we are called. With much thanks to all who contributed and those who wished to remain anonymous I am deeply grateful. Wishing you a holy Lent. Eric+

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