



Lent 2019

Resources for Discussion and Reflection

Prepared by the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission of the Northeastern Ohio Lutheran Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America & Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown

First Sunday of Lent, March 10

Deuteronomy 26: 4-10

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13

This first week of Lent calls upon us to reflect on what has been traditionally called “the temptation of Jesus.” We are told in the story that Jesus was driven into the wilderness after his baptism by the Holy Spirit when he is told by the voice **You are my own dear Son. I am well pleased with you.** Here Jesus must wrestle with a challenge from the Devil: **If you are God’s Son...** Will Jesus receive his identity from God or will he take the matter of his own identity in his own hands? Jesus is tempted to create his own identity based upon security and survival; power and control; and affection, esteem and approval needs.

As we enter the open space of Lent created by our spiritual disciplines, reflect on questions that come from the work of Thomas Keating. *How do we try and create our own happiness programs by seeking an identity upon security and survival; power and control; or affection, esteem and approval. Which of these three happiness programs exert the most control in our lives this year? How do we let go of a life based upon our own happiness programs and embrace our baptismal identity from God?*

Second Sunday of Lent, March 17

Genesis 15:1-12

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 9:28-36

This week’s Gospel story takes us up a hill to pray with Jesus and his inner circle, Peter, James, and John. In the Gospel of Luke, the practice of prayer seems to be a personal discipline of Jesus. While Jesus is praying, his face is changed and his clothes become dazzling white. In what we call the Transfiguration, Jesus appears in the company of the Law in the person of Moses and of the Prophets in the person of Elijah. We hear the same voice from Jesus’ Baptism say: **This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to him.** Jesus’ identity is given to him from above.

What of our smaller selves do we begin to let go of this Lent? What do we allow to be transformed through our prayer life? How can we wrestle with the principalities and powers of our smaller selves so they fall away and we can claim our larger baptismal identity, our real identity, as God’s daughter and sons?

Third Sunday of Lent, March 24

Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9

In this third week of our Lenten journey, we listen to Jesus tell us the parable of "The Fig Tree." Parables are stories that describe both our outer and inner worlds at the same time. The owner of the fig tree wants to cut the unproductive tree down so he can make space for something productive. Instead, the gardener asks for one more season to work on the unproductive tree with standard gardening practices.

This is a real parable of grace. Lent this year is one more chance to work with our spiritual disciplines on both the unproductive and productive parts of our lives. *What are the aspects of our inner lives that seem dead? What are the non-growing aspects of our lives? Where is there growth? How can we allow the grace of one more Lenten season to help us grow into our full identity in God?*

Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 31

Joshua 5:9-12

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-32

We are starting to get tired in our Lenten journey by now. Maybe we have already given up on Lenten disciplines for this year. Maybe it's a good time to hear some words of invitation from another parable of Jesus. We call this the parable of "The Prodigal Son". We put all the emphasis on the repentant younger son coming to his senses. Helmut Thielicke calls it the parable of "The Waiting Father" because both sons were lost to the Father's love. One son rebelled against it and one son thought he had to earn it. The waiting Father goes out to his sons and invites them back into their place of true sonship of his love.

How have we responded to the love of our always waiting divine parent? When have we been rebellious? Have we been trying to earn God's love by our moral behavior and by our right belief? Can we dress up in the clothes of our true identity? Can we accept the invitation to the feast of celebration? Or will we stay eating with the pigs or grumbling outside the feast?

Fifth Sunday of Lent, April 7

Isaiah 43:16-21

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8

Our final reflection of this year's Lenten journey finds us at the table of Lazarus, where Mary, his sister, acts as host. This is the story of the anointing of Jesus feet with perfume made of pure nard, an act of conscious loving. Judas could only see this act of love in terms of its value in money. Her devotion to Jesus becomes the basis of her service.

Have our Lenten disciplines helped transform us into faithful disciples who act with conscious loving? Or are we still living under the sway of our smaller selves like Judas whose self-interest is based on security and survival; power or control; or affection, esteem and approval? Do we create road blocks or are we generous and loving?

Did our Lenten journey this year make us ready to let go? Do we follow Jesus' path of letting go described in the Palm Sunday text from Philippians 2?

**Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.**

For more prayers, resources, and information on the history of the Lutheran Catholic Covenant, visit:

www.lccovenant.weebly.com



Visit the website of the Northeastern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

www.neos-elca.org



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