

THURSDAY, February 6

John 6:63. *It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

Ps [70], 71 * 74 | Genesis 23:1-20 | Hebrews 11:32—12:2 | John 6:60-71

Learning to love others is the most challenging task we have as humans. People are messy. Not all people are doing their best, and some are downright nasty. Sometimes, we can be fooled.

Jesus basically says that in choosing Judas to be one of the twelve, he chose the devil. Read John 6:70—you have to respect Jesus in this moment. It takes deep courage and integrity to keep the devil close by, especially when you're dismantling his entire power structure.

Scandalized people gripe about Jesus saying he is the Bread of Life. And just yesterday, we read about the scandalizing near-sacrifice of Isaac. We are still scandalized by the audacity of the empty tomb and the promise of Jesus' return.

Every teaching about God, by its nature, is at least a little bit scandalous. Thanks be to God for this gift.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Ideato and Idoani (both in Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: When has the extravagance or scandalous nature of God's love surprised you? Tell that story by using #ForwardDayByDay.

THURSDAY, February 13

Absalom Jones

Psalms 146:7. *The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.*

Ps [83] or 146, 147 * 85, 86 | Genesis 27:30-45 | Romans 12:9-21 | John 8:21-32

Today we celebrate the feast of Absalom Jones, who was a pioneer in the life of the Episcopal Church in the United States. As the first African American person ordained in the Episcopal Church, Jones's life of faith was lived boldly in the face of adversity and rejection. It is a gift to the Anglican Communion to celebrate his life because Absalom Jones remained faithful and gracious to a church that was not kind or inclusive or respectful of him as a child of God. His example reaffirms our faith in the God for whom all things are possible.

I think Absalom Jones reminds us all that there are always obstacles to achieving anything in life. He reminds us not to give up; a lasting reminder of how we should live our lives, of how big our Church can and ought to be. Let us pray for the grace of determination and commitment in order to serve God and build longer tables instead of higher walls.

PRAY for the Diocese of Ijebu (Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: Find out more about Absalom Jones and share his story with a friend.

THURSDAY, February 20

Frederick Douglass

John 10:29. *What my father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.*

Ps 105:1-22 * 105:23-45 | Genesis 32:3-21 | 1 John 2:18-29 | John 10:19-30

A wise teacher began each day by asking her students to hand over everything. They would hand in their homework or books or whatever they had. However, the teacher insisted the students give her what they had. *We have nothing*, the students would say. *Hand that over too*, she responded.

God wants everything—even our emptiness, doubts, wounds, and hard memories—all of it. We are called to hand over everything to God. All things seen and unseen belong to God because God made them. God makes all emperors, presidents, bishops, and queens. God has made all our immediate family and close friends. Jesus reminds us that we have community obligations to everyone around us—known and unknown, the empty and the full.

Give everything to God. When there is nothing left, give that to God too.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Ikeduru and Ikka (both in Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: What will your offering to God look like today?

THURSDAY, February 27

George Herbert

John 17:3. *And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

Ps 37:1-18 * 37:19-42 | Habakkuk 3:1-10(11-15)16-18 | Philippians 3:12-21 | John 17:1-8

Lent is a wonderful time to practice mindfulness in our communications with others, to ask the Holy Spirit to help us be intentional in our thoughts and actions and to draw us deeper into relationship with God. It is also important for us to remember that we live in the eternal now, the eternal life of the Living God.

Jesus talks to his disciples about God glorifying him—the Son—in heaven and on earth. This is Jesus' way of reminding us that we should develop an understanding of how heaven and earth are bound together in his incarnation and life. Jesus goes even further, explaining that the glory of God is present to us, even now.

We are called to do all that we can do for the greater honor and glory of God.

PRAY for the Diocese of Ilesa (Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: *Ad majoram Dei gloriam* is the motto of the Society of Jesus. Research this phrase and think about how you might add it to your Lenten discipline.