

A large, weathered wooden cross stands vertically against a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with clouds, some of which are illuminated from below, creating a warm, golden glow. The cross is made of two thick, dark wooden beams. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

Resolute Faith

A 2022 Lenten
Devotional

Written by the community of
St Francis Episcopal Church

W elcome to the sixth annual Lenten Devotional Booklet.

This year's theme is "*Nurturing A Resolute Faith*", a topic particularly dear to my heart during this continued time of transition in our church and the uncertainty of what the future holds. Have there been times your faith has wavered? Does your faith remain steadfast? Why or why not?

As you read the reflections written by your fellow parishioners, I invite you to consider your personal reaction to the scripture passages as well. How might the day's scriptures and/or reflections inspire you to do something differently during Lent? Is there a habit you'd like to give up? Is there a new practice you'd like to begin? What proactive steps can you take to nurture a resolute faith? I encourage you to be still and allow space for the movement of the Spirit.

I'd like to thank you, Father Jerry, for your support of this endeavor; thank you, Susan Marshall, for your stellar design and production skills in creating this booklet; thank you, Laurie Anderson, for your constructive feedback and keen editing; and thank you, reflection writers, for sharing your personal thoughts and stories. Together, we have created a Lenten experience our parish family can walk through as a faith community. I am so very grateful for your commitment to this project.

Let the journey through a meaningful and Holy Lent begin!

In God's Love,

Kristina Pelá,

Shepherd for Pastoral Care



Note - On each Sunday we include a verse from the great Prayer for Peace written by our patron Saint - St. Francis - for you to use for your reflection.

How to Have a Devotional Time

For starters, don't make it complicated! By keeping it simple, you increase the chances of it being achievable.

Set aside some time to quiet your mind and still yourself. Put your phone away and be wherever you are comfortable and free of distractions. It is difficult to tune into God if we surround ourselves with electronics, noise or distractions.

Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to be a part of your devotional time. Say a prayer from your heart, or use a prepared prayer such as this:

Dear God,

Quiet my heart so that I may be still before you; fill me with Your presence and let Your Word and the reflections of Your people help me to hear Your voice.

Then read the scripture passages assigned for the day, pausing between each and taking note of what words, phrases or images stand out to you as you read. You may consider journaling or simply making notations in your Lenten Booklet. After reading through the scriptures once, read through them a second time, again taking note of what words or phrases catch your attention. Then read the reflection and the writer's message.

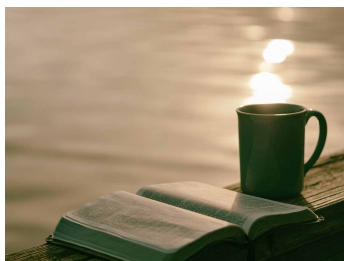
In looking at what stands out to you, consider how God may be speaking to you. Do the scriptures or the reflection stir something within you? Do you feel a "nudge" or a "tug" of some sort? Consider why certain words or phrases are catching your attention and how they might be relevant to your present circumstances.

Inspiration may not come right away, and that is okay ... there is no need to rush to an "answer;" instead, allow God's Word and your thoughts to "marinate," and trust that the Spirit is at work during your devotional time and beyond.

May God bless your devotional time with whatever it is that you most need!

In God's Love,

Kristina Pelá,
Shepherd for Pastoral Care



Ash Wednesday, March 2

Amos 5:6-15, Psalm 102, 130, Hebrews 12:1-14, Luke 18:9-14

“Seek the Lord and live, or He will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.” Amos 5:6

The children were in bed, we had finished the evening chores, relaxed for an hour, and had just gone to bed. I was starting to fall asleep when suddenly I heard it. I said to my wife, “That plane seems to be flying awfully low.” Then she asked, “What is that light?” We rose from bed, opened the curtains, and saw a pillar of fire in the distance. I thought it was a gas station on fire in the next block, but it was a plume of fire caused by a ruptured gas main nearly a mile away. The nearby apartment complex was completely consumed by the fire. Fortunately, no one died from the fire, but one man died from a heart attack.

Over the next few weeks, the local community rallied around the survivors with shelter, food, and supplies to help them get back on their feet. We eventually learned that a construction crew had caused a small fracture in the gas line that eventually ignited. Carelessness, inattention, and neglect resulted in the great disaster.

Amos warns that unless the people seek the Lord, fire will break out against the house of Joseph (a figurative description for prominent tribes in the Northern Kingdom of Israel). The prophet is concerned for justice and righteousness among the people and, because of their wickedness, they will be consumed by the Kingdom of Assyria.

Now that happened long ago and far away, but in our own day we are in danger of being consumed by anger, bitterness, and hatred in the face of systemic racism, economic injustice, and political division. How often do we resent someone for speaking the truth or correcting us? Do we care more about the value of our own home than the homeless who live under bridges? Amos reminds us that Lent is not just about getting our personal spiritual life in order, it is an opportunity to “Hate evil and love good and establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:15).

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Ash Wednesday, March 2

Amos 5:6-15, Psalm 102, 130, Hebrews 12:1-14, Luke 18:9-14

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It was neglect that caused a pipeline to rupture and destroy people's lives. If we fail to seek God, the good, and justice, we will burn down our own lives and communities. Let us resolutely seek the LORD that we may live.



The Rev. Jerry Sather is Priest-in-Charge (Interim) at St. Francis Episcopal Church. Jerry has served in full-time ministry for 33 years and recently retired from the U.S. Air Force following 21 years as a military chaplain. He and his wife, Annette, have three adult children and a granddaughter living in California.

Thursday, March 3

Hab 3:1-10, 16-18, Psalm 37:19-42, Phil 3:12-21, John 17:1-8

Habakkuk, I learned, is one of the “12 Minor Prophets.” We don’t know much about him, or even the historical circumstances he so vividly writes about. We can tell from his very short book that he had a lot of, well, chutzpah. In the passages before today’s reading, he demands that God account for the terrible, violent events that have happened to the people of Judah. He brazenly wonders aloud how a God whose “eyes are too pure to behold evil” can stand silent while the wicked prevail? Habakkuk challenges God, asking why he lets the oppressors treat his people “like fish of the sea” to be hauled up on hooks and devoured? God answers in a shocking way – He boasts that he has stirred up the Chaldeans to overrun his people and wreak unspeakable havoc – persecuting both the righteous and the wicked equally. God affirms, however, that the upright will, in the end, live through their faithfulness – and this triggers a litany of curses, presumably by the prophet, on the oppressors.

Next, as described in the reading today, Habakkuk describes a vision of a furious God, girding for battle and causing even the seas and mountains to tremble in terror. Habakkuk also trembles, but then resolves to calmly await the day of calamity that is dawning on the Chaldeans. In this violent, apocalyptic ending, Habakkuk opts to rejoice in God, his savior.

The whole book of Habakkuk – only a few pages long – is deeply unsettling. Why must the bad be punished with more bad? How can revenge be a source of rejoicing and delight? If the God of this book were standing by and weeping at the evil of humans, we might understand. But he is deliberately causing mayhem at an international level. In modern times, humans have inflicted unspeakable horrors on each other – genocide, ethnic cleansing, violent racism and homophobia. But we do not see God as either an instigator or an avenger in these events. We see him full of infinite love and forgiveness. How do we reconcile these two contradictory images of God? It is not easy. One commonality: Whether we view God as a vengeful God or a merciful one, the path through the worst madness involves keeping faith that in the end, there will be justice and peace. And faith and hope, Paul tells us, are things that endure forever.



Laura Boudreau has attended St. Francis since her two children, Joe and Anne, were toddlers. They are now two grounded, caring teenagers. Laura joined the church because her otherwise fidgety kids – who couldn’t stand church elsewhere – loved St. Francis’s Sunday school and the beautiful campus. Laura is grateful for all the church has done for her family – teaching us the importance of community and service.

Friday, March 4

Ezek 18:1-4, 25-32, Psalm 35, Phil 4:1-9, John 17:9-19

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God ... And the God of peace will be with you”. Phil. 4:5b-6, 9

Today’s Philippians passage brought so much comfort to me, and I hope it does for you as well.

Verse 5 tells us the Lord is near. Just that alone brings me back to our Taizé quiet time. That is a verse that is chanted over and over, like a prayer. It quiets my soul. In verse 6, we are reminded not to be anxious. I was so surprised by this! It seems like anxiety, worry, and nervousness are so present in today’s society. I never stopped to think that they were there in Jesus’s time, too. Yet here it is right in the Bible. At the end of verse 9, we are reminded that the God of Peace will be with us.

I often think that things in life are easier with a partner. This doesn’t have to be a spouse. It could be a friend, a co-worker, a child, or a stranger. It might even be different people at different times. To be able to speak openly about what troubles you can be a huge task, but one that is always easier with someone else. We are lucky to live in a world where we are learning it is alright to speak about mental health, to speak about what worries us, to learn that we are not alone, and that others share the same worries and hopes. Not only do we have friends and family for this, but therapists, psychologists, medicines, and hotlines. We are not alone in our struggles. When we feel we are, we have to remember the scriptures and let them quiet our fears.

God is with us. He is with us through everything, and especially the hard times. He will hold our hands and our hearts and not let us be alone. It still might be difficult, but knowing that there is ALWAYS someone in your corner — someone who loves you and wants Peace in your heart — can ease your burden. Listen and He will be there.



Jennifer Sams is a daughter, wife, mom, teacher, and friend. She loves her family, pets, crafts, travel, and quiet time. She is trying to be a better listener and is learning to make listening to God more of a priority. Every therapy walk she takes with her friends is a blessing.

Saturday, March 5

Ezek 39:21-29, Psalm 42, Phil 4:10-20, John 17:20-26

At times over the past two years, it has felt a bit like we've been living in exile as we've needed to restrict our movements in an effort to stay safe and contain the spread of COVID. The feeling of being in unfamiliar territory has been exacerbated as we've witnessed widening polarization across society, growing distrust of well-established institutions, and threats to our democratic system. Our current situation and the resulting unease make the passage from the prophet Ezekiel all the more relevant and impactful.

The context surrounding Ezekiel's writing was one of complete social upheaval. Ezekiel was caught up in one of the first groups of Israelites exiled from the Promised Land to Babylon. The specific passage referenced above was written following the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians in 586 BCE which filled the Hebrew people with feelings of sorrow and hopelessness. So, what can we learn from Ezekiel?

Ezekiel's references to "sovereign Lord" are a reminder that our God is the ultimate authority who possesses supreme power and is the Creator of all things. Ezekiel goes on to provide a message of Hope by telling us of God's intentions—to use his power to shower us with Grace, have compassion on us, and pour out His Spirit to restore us to wholeness.

The passages from Paul's letter to the Philippians and the Gospel of John reinforce this same message. Paul re-affirms that "God will meet all our needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." And in John's passage, Jesus explains how the glory of God is extended to all who choose to believe and is intended to bring us all into complete unity.

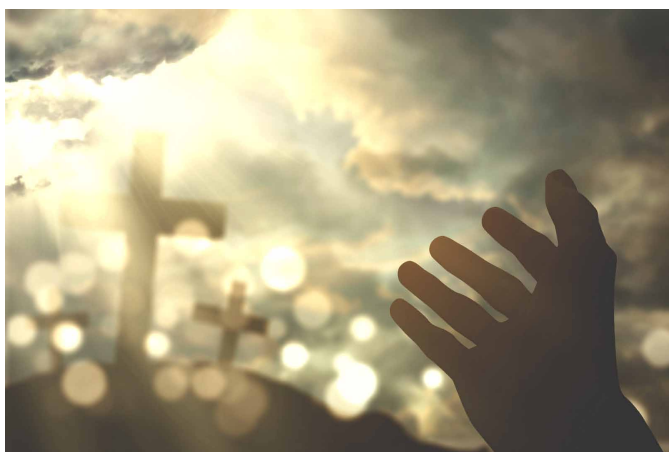
Amid the strains of the current times, let us connect with the hope offered through these passages. Let us open ourselves to receive the love of God that is poured out for us. And, as Jesus modeled, let us do our part in extending God's Love to others so that we all may become one.



Jack Hailwood is the son of an Episcopal minister who actively served for over 55 years primarily in the Diocese of Los Angeles. Jack and his wife, Frances, have been members of St. Francis Church for nearly four years.

Sunday, March 6

Lord, make me an
instrument of Thy Peace



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

Monday, March 7

Gen. 37:1-11, Psalm 44, 1 Cor. 1:1-19, Mark 1:1-13

After reading over these scripture passages several times, I decided that Psalm 44 was what resonated most with me. People have so many things to worry about: the pandemic, the political divide in the US, climate change and weather problems, political unrest in other countries, the economy, personal concerns/problems, and the list goes on.

So, Psalm 44 seems to be rather a dark Psalm where the people of Israel are calling out to God to rescue them. But, verse 8 “In God we boast all day long and praise Your name forever” sounds like a verse of thanksgiving. It sounds to me like they are thanking God for what he has done in the past and also in anticipation for what He will do in answer to their current prayers.

I feel like perhaps that can apply to us today and it is what gives us hope for the future. We as a country and a world have many problems, many things about which we are praying for answers to. We know that there have been many problems in the past and that God has always shown us a way past them. We need to have hope that God will again lead us to answers to our current problems.

There have been many times recently when I do not want to read the newspaper or watch the news because I feel like it is all bad. But, then I see a story that gives me hope. There are so many good people who are doing good things. Whether it is someone running a food pantry out of their garage or strangers helping a family dealing with a cancer diagnosis/death, there are literally hundreds of good, hopeful stories if we just look for them.

It reminds us that we can all be participants in good, hopeful stories as we find ways to help others with “good deeds” and kindness. It doesn’t have to be anything big or monumental, but we can always find something to do that will be helpful to someone else. It is important to remember our charge to love our neighbor as ourselves and if we all do that, then there is great hope for the future. God will answer our prayers so we need to keep giving thanks and praise to Him!



Joyce Alley's favorite role these days is being “Nana” to her granddaughter, Carson, who is almost two. It is because of her that Joyce has hope for the future! Joyce is a cradle Episcopalian and she loves living in Southern California and attending St. Francis.

Tuesday, March 8

Gen. 37:12-24, Psalm 47, 48, 1 Cor. 1:20-31, Mark 1:14-28

“So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. “Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

Genesis 37:17b-24

What inspired my reflection from the passage of Genesis are three things: (1) the haters of Joseph because he was a dreamer, (2) the haters and the protector were those closest to him, his brothers, and (3) is not the Resurrection of Jesus Christ a hope?

As I read this passage, I could feel the hatred others had of Joseph for having dreams. I have felt that similar hatred of my dreams in so many ways as a Black-Gay man. Some have wanted to kill my dreams, my dreams of believing in Jesus Christ and His Resurrection. My dream to make something of myself and my life. My dream to find love in all my relationships and with that one special life-long person. My dream to consistently experience my relationship with Our Lord God Jesus Christ.

I experienced the sabotage of my relationships, and realized I was one of the perpetrators unbeknownst to me. Self-loathing is a harmful act to one’s self-esteem and well-being; my self-loathing of denying my dreams is a sin against me. Just because others hate me does not make it right to hate myself, but I have done it unknowingly. I remind myself that God does not hate me, so why hate myself?

This passage inspires me with Hope. I have this dream of peaceful and loving relationships with all. Isn’t this not only my dream, but also God’s command or want?

This Lent will be a time for me to examine my relationships with myself and others. This Lent, instead of giving up, I will look inward and embrace my dreams and hopes regardless of the haters closest to me, including myself. As John Bacon told me, “Life is about relationships.” This Lent I will fully embrace my dreams by disregarding naysayers, and instead meditate on this: “What if I found love in all my relationships?”



Darryl Tillman is a second-time vestry member and has been with St. Francis for over 27 years. Thanks to Jay, John, and Liz (“Mary”) Bacon, Darryl found a loving and accepting church that has allowed him to continue to live his best life.

Wednesday, March 9

Gen. 37:25-36, Psalm 49, 1 Cor. 2:1-13, Mark 1:29-45

“However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

This verse hit me as a strong message about the strength and validity of God’s Spirit. His Spirit is everywhere. During this pandemic era, I have found His Spirit to be a support system in my life. The power of His Spirit is all around us through a calming effect in this turbulent time and increasing our compassion for one another as we all go through an exceedingly challenging time together. The special power of the Holy Spirit is His existence within us. The Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as the “hands” and “fingers” of God. Jesus said that the “Holy Spirit would come and dwell within us as a believer.” As a strong believer in God, I feel that the Spirit is alive and lives solidly within me.

I suffered a serious arm injury the day before Thanksgiving while with family in Texas. I am right-handed and was unable to use my right arm for seven weeks, thus depending on my family for help with my daily needs. It was a very humbling time for me being a retired nurse and very independent. My faith in God, His Spirit of healing, and calm got me through an exceedingly difficult two months. My prayers were answered through His healing Spirit, by giving me strength to endure and be strong in my faith, while healing and getting my dexterity back. My strong trust in God, my daily prayers, and my trust in His Spirit have been a large part of my daily healing process.



Sue Ferme has made many achievements in her life. One has been being blessed with three firefighter sons and her amazing husband Jack. With Covid limiting so many things it is difficult to be humble and give back where she enjoys serving the homeless and our church.

Thursday, March 10

Gen. 39:1-23, Psalm 59, 60, 1 Cor. 2:14-3:15, Mark 2:1-12

“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.” 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

This reading from Corinthians contains several important thoughts. First, the phrase that “only God gives growth” reminds us that all things come from above. I cannot help but be reminded of the offertory prayer at our 8:00 a.m. service: “All things come from thee O Lord and of thine own have I given thee.” God is the source of everything and we are derivatives.

Second, the reading states that, while each of us may perform a different function in the Church, we should “as God’s servants, work together with a common purpose.” While it is easy to say that, we all know that, given our human nature, this is sometimes difficult to do when confronted with a particular situation. It is natural that members of our Church will have different ideas as to how we should deal with difficult situations. These differences of opinion are natural because each of us has different perspectives on the situation based on our own thoughts, knowledge and experience. These differences can turn into disagreements, however, when we fail to “work together for the common purpose.”

So, what should we do when differences are apt to become disagreements?

First, we should agree on what is the “common purpose” — that is, the “common good” — for our Parish. I would suggest that it is the welfare, well-being and future of the Parish.

Second, once we agree on the “common purpose,” we should determine how we can “work together” to achieve this common purpose. The following are a few ideas:

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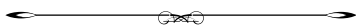
Thursday, March 10

Gen. 39:1-23, Psalm 59, 60, 1 Cor. 2:14-3:15, Mark 2:1-12

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- Trust in God. He has given each of us the power of reason. We should analyze the particular situation at hand objectively and carefully;
- Try to overcome our own personal biases and personal preferences, think outside ourselves and do our best to understand the positions of those who differ;
- Be willing to compromise and try to reach a consensus as to what should be done.

I hope that these thoughts are helpful as we continue to be in community as co-workers in God's service.



Richard Briggs has been a member of St. Francis Episcopal Church for almost forty years. He is currently on the Vestry and is serving as Junior Warden for this year.

Friday, March 11

Gen. 40:1-23, Psalm 51, 1 Cor. 3:16-23, Mark 2:13-22

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Psalm 51:1-2

I read all the readings for today, and Psalm 51 spoke to me the clearest. This reading seemed quite familiar to me. It reminded me of a prayer I learned as a child in my Catholic CCD classes (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine). The name of the prayer is the Act of Contrition prayer. The prayer taught us the state of feeling penitent — feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong. The focus we were being taught is to seek forgiveness from God.

I often pray this prayer at the end of the day. I’m not saying we all do something every day in which we need to ask for forgiveness, but for me it opens me up to God. It helps me to ask God to see things I may have done or may have not done in the best light. It also helps me to ask for His guidance daily to be a more well-rounded kind person.

The psalmist asks for mercy even though we can fail God daily. He asks for God’s grace on us, and I also think that allows us to have grace for ourselves. I often feel that giving myself grace is one of the hardest things to do. “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within.”

Psalm 51 gives us the Hope we need to continue each day in our journey with God. It lets us know that God will forgive us and be there for us. We each have a relationship with God. He is there to listen and forgive...trust in that and you will grow in your relationship with God.



Alyce Metzroth, her husband Michael, and their son Ryan have been part of St. Francis Church since July 2016. Alyce is on the Vestry and helps with the St. Luke's Food for the Homeless. She still plans to travel to Spain someday in the future. She and the family currently have a trip to London planned.

Saturday, March 12

Gen. 41:1-13, Psalm 138, 1 Cor. 4:1-7, Mark 2:23-3:6

After reading the 1 Corinthians passage a few times, I reflected that the ministry of the apostles and the ministry of all of us is to be humble, to not judge, to look for similarities not differences, and to trust in God, our ultimate judge. It made me think about how many times I could be more humble in my words and actions. I've always admired people who accomplish good or great things but never boast.

Of course, this passage also made me think about the challenging times we are experiencing today. How can our political leaders state facts and not brag or be overly persuasive? How can I do that when I am trying to convince someone that getting the Covid vaccine is thoughtful and is what Christ meant when he said, "Love thy neighbor as thy self"? Does my pride or arrogance affect the way I speak and treat others? Do I sound as though I am judging someone by their decisions and deeds? Do I need to remember that God will judge us? Definitely, yes! And we do not need to worry about judging ourselves. That's a relief although I believe it's important that I self assess, reflect and try to be better each day...

Now, more than ever, I believe we need to look for the goodness and similarities in others. In the world of politics, people are tearing down one another. Maybe too often they are "puffed up in favor of one against the other"? Sadly, in our everyday world, there is unspeakable violence, hatred, and killing! Are people judging others harshly and making decisions as to who's to live and who's to die? Maybe too few see God's beauty in themselves, in others, in nature, in art, in a pet, or in treasured moments. And if we are all as humble as God wishes us to be, hopefully we will only feel and share love, understanding, compassion and empathy. I pray this for myself, for others, for our country and for our world.



Elizabeth (Liz) Cantine is a retired English, history and dance educator, and founder of Ready, Willing and Able, a dance program for students with special needs. She currently continues to teach dance and is completing her 3rd book after publishing Graceful Gratitude and Brush of Giftedness.

Sunday, March 13

...Where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is injury,
pardon;



Monday, March 14

Gen. 41:46-57, Psalm 64, 65, 1 Cor. 4:8-20, Mark 3:7-19a

“Jesus departed with His disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him; hearing all that He was doing, they came to Him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon.” Mark 3:7-8

Jesus healed a multitude, but more kept coming and crowding him. I imagine Jesus felt overwhelmed.

The Gospel mentions that Jesus went to be alone at times to pray, taking time for himself, for Jesus was both Divine and human. Jesus as human needed community and support to minister to all the suffering. He appointed apostles to proclaim the good news and heal the afflicted. Then He went home to restore His energy and care for His body, mind, and spirit. Jesus as our Savior is telling us today to reach out to friends for support, and to care for ourselves.

During these times of incredible difficulties, I wonder about the world, relationships, and family. I can feel overwhelmed with life and exhausted. Yet, I want to do more, even though I have no superpowers nor unlimited stamina. There are times I feel stressed, weary, and uncertain about life. Then, I reach out to friends, pray, and care for myself. I am comforted knowing that Jesus may have felt exhausted and understands. Jesus invites me to go home to rest, pray, and let God be God, bringing my burdens to Jesus for healing. Today’s passage goes on to say, although not referenced, that “the crowd came together again.”

Life’s stresses will return, but I know by taking time to rest and sit with the Lord, I can begin again refreshed and able to be the best I can be in ministry. Jesus encourages and teaches me to care for myself so I may fully live into God’s plan for me. He is with me and helps me endure life’s difficulties with Love, faithfulness, and Hope. Jesus is the ultimate Counselor, Healer, and Savior, who understands my feelings and knows what I need. Many times, I set aside my own care, but I need to care for myself in order to be fully present to others and follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

During this season of Lent, our Savior invites you and me to not only love others but to learn to love and care for ourselves in order to best serve God.



Reverend Celeste Stump is a deacon at St. Francis, chaplain at The Canterbury, mother, grandmother, and friend. Celeste lives with her son, Ghilchrist, in Carson. She is inspired by the grace and love of each person she meets and is changed by their presence in her life. “I am blessed and thankful to be part of this wonderful community of St. Francis and The Canterbury.”

Tuesday, March 15

Gen. 42:1-17, Psalm 68, 1 Cor. 5:1-8, Mark 3:19b-35

Mark quotes Jesus, “How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”

In this passage, Jesus not only “warns” us against the dangers of a house (or kingdom) divided against itself... he frankly asserts that “it cannot stand”. That very same assertion was repeated almost 1900 years later (in 1858) by Abraham Lincoln, as he was about to accept the Republican nomination as Senator of Illinois. In both cases, I believe both Jesus and Senator Lincoln were warning us about the dangers of hubris; the arrogance that makes both Biblical Philistines and modern politicians so easily overlook their moral contradictions.

None of the other three passages (above) generated the interest in me as that of Mark... probably because the past several years have become so polarizing, nationally... to the point that there is virtually no “middle ground” to be found, very much as in the years leading up to the Civil War. Admittedly, when I was much younger, I was a bit naïve. However, I don’t recall the politicians of my youth exhibiting the “vitriol” of the current ones.

Still, today as in Jesus’ time, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” is not a good role model for national success. If we are to survive as a nation, we need to foster a new crop of young leaders. They must be people who realize that partisan politics is NOT pulling our house “together,” but rather pulling it apart, just as it had done in the time of Lincoln. And I firmly believe that our youth have the ability, and the motivation to pull it off.



David Gerhardt is a husband, father and grandfather; rocket (and mechanical) engineer; cyclist; photographer; auto enthusiast; ardent supporter of ex-racing Greyhounds... and lifelong Episcopalian.

Wednesday, March 16

Gen. 42:18-28, Psalm 119:73-96, 1 Cor. 5:9-6:8, Mark 4:1-20

There is a lot of great material in the readings above, but it is the Psalm verses that resonated with me today.

What struck me are the swings between faith and doubt which the author seems to be expressing. “I know, O Lord, that your judgements are right,” and “The Lord exists for ever; your word is firmly fixed in heaven.”

But then conversely, “My soul languishes for your salvation,” and “How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me?”

I feel that pain. How often in my own life have I told myself, or heard from others, that God is present with me, cares for me, knows of my existence along with every sparrow and every lily of the field? So, in that case – why? Why Covid? Why sickness and death? Why poverty and bigotry? Why aggression, violence, greed and war? How long indeed must we wait for salvation and judgement of the arrogant who flout the law?

One of my daughters once asked me, “Mummy – if there is a God, would it not be possible for them to make it a bit more obvious, maybe fix a few things sometimes?” I couldn’t agree more, and the Psalmist is right there with us.

So, what to do. How do we endure? What do we think or say when someone has given up that struggle and decided that life is no longer worth living? Where was God then, when the chips were down?

I don’t have an answer. The best I can do is lean on the last words of verse 74: “I have hoped in your word.”

“Hope.” The last tiny thing at the very bottom of Pandora’s chest when all else was lost. Hope for a better tomorrow. Hope that the support of friends and strangers will be there when the way is dark. Hope that trying to follow the teachings of Jesus and all the great leaders of faith will lead me to live a kinder, more generous life no matter what.

Hope that at the very least, at some times, and in some places, love *will* win.



Susan Marshall is the Communications Specialist and a member of St. Francis. She is deeply blessed with love for and from husband Peter, daughters Melissa and Zoë, and their own loved ones. Favorite pizza - pepperoni; ice cream - Ben & Jerry's Phish Food. Cats or dogs? Cats (too lazy to go for walks!).

Thursday, March 17

Gen. 42:29-38, Psalm 74, 1 Cor. 6:12-20, Mark 4:21-34

In Mark 4: 21-34, Jesus teaches using parables. I'm not so good at parables. They've always confused me. However, the Bible I read has brief insights written in the margins to help the reader understand the passage. In this passage, I learned that Jesus uses the mustard seed analogy to illustrate the point that God delights in small beginnings: a little mustard seed that grows to have stalks as big as a man's arm.

These past two years have been tough on us all. However, I think that during that time, God has been planting little seeds of HOPE in nature, fed with LOVE so they flourish in our midst.

I find God in nature. When I look around at amazing flowers, bright cacti and towering trees, I wonder how so many beautiful things can exist in our world. They all started from small seedlings. Planted by God. Reminding us that He is ever present. Small Beginnings.

My sweet peas the past two years have spilled out of the flower bed 6 feet onto the grass! My climbing rose rained pink petals all over the yard! If you drive up Sepulveda past the airport, there are several blocks of large succulents planted. This year one specific type of succulent threw up (as my Arizona friends call it) these huge stalks with flowers that bloomed all the way up the stalk! When I say huge, I mean 20+ feet tall! I've been driving that way for ten years and have NEVER seen that happen before. Think of the little mustard seed. Small Beginnings.

During this Lenten season, look around you at the seeds of love and hope that God is sowing. I think you will be surprised at what catches your eye!



Liz Cook has been a member of St. Francis her entire life. Over the years she has served the parish in a variety of ways as Verger, Lay Reader, Altar Guild Directress, and Vestry member. She and her husband, Bob, were married in the big church almost 36 years ago. St. Francis has been a wonderful place to raise their children, Bryan and Kristen. St. Francis will always be home to her.

Friday, March 18

Gen. 43:1-15, Psalm 73, 1 Cor. 7:1-9, Mark 4:35-41

“He said to His disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’” Mark 4:40

I have read and heard this passage from the Gospel of Mark many times. This is the first time it whacked me over the head. “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” I was meant to read this. It is definitely one of those Holy Spirit whispers/nudges.

We are moving to Maryland to be near our son Matt, his wife Joanna, and our little granddaughter Ellie. We are stressed out of our minds. Both David and I are used to only warm weather. We will be leaving behind our beloved church, neighborhood, friends, and some family. The idea of packing and leaving a house we have lived in since 1978 feels daunting.

And yet...when I look back, God has been nudging us, giving us answers, and has been by our side every step of the way. Why am I so afraid? Do I still have no faith?

We drove to and from Maryland to babysit Ellie for six months. It was stressful beyond belief when we came back to a mice-infested house. It took about four months to get things back to “normal.” One of my friends told me jokingly that it was God’s way of hurrying us to start to declutter to get ready for the move. Ha ha!

Not having any idea where to live is nerve-wracking at best. I used my protractor to draw a 6-mile radius around the kids’ house on the map. Voila! Rockville popped up.

As I remember each of these incidents, why was I so blind not to see God’s hand leading us every step of the way? I will rebuke the unknown/stress/change and say, “Quiet! Be still!” I will not be afraid and I will have faith that we are not doing this alone.



HeeSun Gerhardt and her husband David celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2021. They have been attending St. Francis Episcopal Church since 1997. Their son Matthew was confirmed at St. Francis and he enjoyed attending Sunday School and being part of the Youth Group. They will miss the wonderful people and staff of this very loving church.

Saturday, March 19

Gen. 43:16-34, Psalm 23, 27, 1 Cor. 7:10-24, Mark 5:1-20

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me” Psalm 23:4

Like many other Christians, I have always found comfort in the words of the 23rd Psalm. But reading it recently, I asked myself, “Why is that?” For me, the answer is best expressed by verse 4, where comfort is drawn from “your rod and your staff ...”, which are references to signs of God’s presence in the physical world from the story of the Exodus. But how do I feel God’s physical presence in today’s world?

An experience from a few years ago felt like the kind of comfort expressed in this Psalm. Every day I go running for a few miles, always alone, but had been having problems with ankle pain for a few weeks which made it difficult to continue this practice. One day, as I started to run, with a little prayer I asked God to run with me. Much to my surprise, as I ran that day I could feel a strong presence by my side, and most amazingly, my ankle was free of all pain. That day I experienced an incredibly deep feeling of comfort...I had felt God’s presence right next to me. The next day I did the same thing, said a prayer to God to run with me. But this time there was a very different answer. I felt a response saying, “No, this time you run with Me.” So I went with God leading the way for several miles and it was again an incredibly comforting experience. I must have said the Jesus Prayer 770 times as I ran pain-free with God again that day: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me.”

To this day, whether I am following in God’s direction, or God is with me on my journey, it is the invitation, the conversation, and the sharing between us that gives me the comfort that I feel. As we walk together, God does not always remove the pain and the shadows from my life, but I can always feel God beside me. Now I realize it is that relationship with God that the 23rd Psalm is describing.



Albert Zimmerman is a 24-year parishioner at St. Francis, and is grateful that those years have been a time of coming closer to God. In addition to running, he enjoys making new jam and marmalade recipes for friends and for sale at the St. Francis Antique Show, which he hopes will return this year.

Sunday,
March 20

...Where there is doubt,
(let me sow) faith;
where there is despair,
hope;



Monday, March 21

Gen. 44:18-34, Psalm 77, 1 Cor. 7:25-31, Mark 5:21-43

"I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands..." Psalm 77:1-2

"Your ways, God, are holy, what god is as great as our God?" Psalm 77:13

Many years ago, when my children were young teenagers, I decided to take them on a one-day winter excursion to Frasier Park, thirty-five miles north of Los Angeles. We planned to indulge in a day of "snow play" with plastic sleds, lots of unhealthy snacks, and CD's playing "Green Day" and "Sublime."

My two children, plus two neighbors under the age of fifteen, and I climbed into my Toyota to have a day of fun in the mountains. But a few miles before our destination on Mt. Pinos, I hit a rock and blew out a tire. I stopped, got out of my car, and desperately tried to remember what my father had taught me about changing a flat. I felt like I was in dire straits, with four kids, no cell phone, and fading confidence about my ability to handle anything that was flung at me.

Fortunately, within ten minutes, a kind family stopped and soon my tire was changed and we were on our way to a great day of play. I offered some money to the gentleman who changed my tire, but he just encouraged me to "pay it forward."

Grace comes into our lives in so many ways, many of them unexpected. My relief in being rescued on Mt. Pinos was immense, but I don't know that I paid that kind deed "forward" in the next few weeks after my ordeal. However, I have thought often about how God works in our lives in ways that may be mysterious, but ways that also ask us to respond as better, bigger people. One of the readings for today covers the story of Jairus, whose little daughter, thought to be dead, was awakened by Jesus. We don't know what happened after the little girl got up, but I like to imagine that Jairus felt his life had changed. Even in dark times, Grace comes our way and we can find a path to "pay it forward."

In our own common and uncommon ways, we can all be agents of Grace.



A retired English teacher, Gayle Taylor has considered St. Francis her spiritual home for many years. She enjoys cooking, hiking, volunteer work, and traveling to places near and far with her friend, Joe Young.

Tuesday, March 22

Gen. 45:1-15, Psalm 78:40-72, 1 Cor. 7:32-40, Mark 6:1-13

“Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” Genesis 45:4-5

“I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided.” 1 Corinthians 7:32-34

I immediately latched on to the first 9 words of today’s reading from 1 Corinthians. YES, I’d like to be free from concern, too! But how?

We tend to hold a multitude of concerns in our hearts, some of which may include the potential negative repercussions of the choices we or our loved ones or others who affect our lives make.

But besides such concerns, which are life’s stressors, there is concern, as in worry. To live in a state of concern robs us of the Joy God places before us in the present. God does not and will not give us a life free of stress; instead, He encourages us to not allow our worries to creep (or forcefully take over and go) into control mode. How often do we find ourselves trying to fix, manage or micro-manage that which concerns us? Ironically, the more we try to control circumstances – be they ours or those of others — the more out of control we feel. If we free ourselves from the misplaced burden we take on by attempting to control what’s outside of ourselves, we will be significantly freer from concern.

In today’s passage from Genesis, we read how the story of Joseph and his brothers ends. God created a nation out of a very troubled family, one consumed by human jealousy and familial dysfunction! Can we trust God to do the same for us, that He will bring forth His good works to help us through whatever messes we may find within our laundry list of concerns?

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Tuesday, March 22

Gen. 45:1-15, Psalm 78:40-72, 1 Cor. 7:32-40, Mark 6:1-13

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Hardships and grief will come into our lives whether or not we choose to be concerned about them 24/7. But if we trust in the Source instead of trying to be the source, that action alone may very well bring us one step closer to being free from concern.



Kristina Pelá and her husband Fabrizio have been members of St. Francis for more than 20 years. Kristina is trying to put into practice what she “preaches” in this reflection. It is easier said than done, but she does her best to focus her concern on the Lord’s affairs instead of dividing her interests among the stressors in her life.

Wednesday, March 23

Gen. 45:16-28, Psalm 81, 82, 1 Cor. 8:1-13, Mark 6:13-29

“I removed the burden from their shoulders....” Psalm 81

What are your burdens? They may range from the mundane to the critical, from an annoying neighbor who doesn't control his barking dog to a health scare that throws your life into a panic, or from a forgotten unpaid bill to a serious addiction problem with a beloved family member.

In today's lessons from Genesis, we continue the story of Joseph and his brothers. Like much of the world's great literature, this story describes an unhappy family, tormented not just by famine in the land of Canaan but by guilt over the sale, many years earlier, of a younger brother into slavery in Egypt. Rife with dramatic irony, this tale of the eventual reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers and Joseph's reunion with his father makes us think about our own unresolved burdens.

Where is God in all this? In some ways, this story of Joseph's sale into Egypt, eventual elevation to a position of great power in Pharaoh's court, and ability to interpret dreams and thus mitigate the seven-year famine that struck the region, points to a God fully involved in human affairs. But I think an often overlooked point is that Joseph does not seek a cruel revenge against the men who sold him into slavery; instead, he instructs them to bring all their families (over seventy people) into Egypt, where they will be blessed with good land and abundant resources. Eventually, as we know, the Hebrews had to flee Egypt, but not until they had unified into a people.

Where is God in the resolution of our own problems? I suggest we invite Him in when we ponder how to handle a difficult relationship or disappointment in our career path. I suggest we think of God before we erupt in rage over a broken promise or mean-spirited remark. We can still be strong and forthright — Joseph was absolutely the role model of thoughtful strength — but we should not forget to ask God what to do to relieve our burdens. If we listen, He will answer, perhaps not immediately or quite to our liking, but with an answer that makes sense.



A retired English teacher, Gayle Taylor has considered St. Francis her spiritual home for many years. She enjoys cooking, hiking, volunteer work, and traveling to places near and far with her friend, Joe Young.

Thursday, March 24

Gen. 46:1-7, 28-34, Psalm 85, 1 Cor. 9:1-15, Mark 6:30-46

“I will listen to what God the Lord says; He promises Peace to His people, His faithful servants — but let them not turn to folly. Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that His glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and Peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.” Psalm 85:8-13

Psalms don't often speak to me, but I was struck by this one as I reflected on today's readings. The Psalm is titled “For The Director Of Music,” which these days deserves pause, given our Covid singing status! The Psalm begins with an acknowledgement of God's forgiveness, followed by a plea for God's loving kindness. But, for me, verses 8-13 are where the poetry takes hold.

Peace, shalom, tranquility, and contentment are promised to His servants who hold God in awe. I've heard this before and usually, especially in Psalms, the references do not seem relevant to me and my world (swords, fields, peoples and places that aren't familiar to me) but what filled me today was this delightful image of God's salvation. The personifications of Love, faithfulness, righteousness and Peace coming together and embracing His people. Faithfulness springing up and righteousness gazing down. What a picture!

This proclamation of salvation and picture of Peace is a scene I want to hold onto. Yes, the Lord will indeed give that which is good. The Psalmist seems to be anticipating a revisiting of that harmonious time when God saw everything that He had created and called it good.

Dear Lord, please help me to listen to you and to revere you. I want to be a faithful servant. Thank you for this delightful vision of what Your glory will be and for Jesus' promise, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.”



Susie Willigrod and her husband Steve have been attending St Francis for about 10 years. Susie came for the choir, but they have found the entire church to be a loving home.

Friday, March 25

Gen. 47:1-26, Psalm 91, 92, 1 Cor. 9:16-27, Mark 6:47-56

“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” If you say, “The Lord is my refuge,” and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” Psalm 91:1-2, 9-12

I am a 22-year-old with tremendous drive and determination to create a great life for myself. Presently, I wake up every morning at 5 a.m. to get in a workout at the gym, work full-time as a paralegal, and attend Arizona State University online full-time. For the first three years after high school graduation, I was also cheerleading for the Los Angeles Clippers basketball team. I share an apartment with my younger brother, Leonardo, who is making his own way and makes me proud to watch his growth.

St. Francis is my church home. As a senior in high school, I was confirmed here after singing in the choir as a child and playing handbells for a number of services with my grandma, brother and father. I feel very connected to everyone here because they have supported me and watched me grow up. I didn't come to church much after graduation, although I continued to find my way through devotionals and podcasts. After live-streaming the service for what seemed like forever, I was thrilled when we were able to open our doors again and decided to make my best effort to attend church every Sunday and even got involved in teaching Sunday School.

To me, this Psalm spells out exactly who I am and who God is. As I continue to grow up, I find myself exercising faith in a stronger capacity than ever. I walk with God everywhere I go. Oftentimes I catch myself getting anxious knowing my lifestyle doesn't match that of my peers. When I feel anxious, my grandma always tells me to “put on the whole armor of God!” I always tend to come back to God when I have bouts of anxiety, or simply make a mistake.

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Friday, March 25

Gen. 47:1-26, Psalm 91, 92, 1 Cor. 9:16-27, Mark 6:47-56

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This scripture resonated with me because I find refuge in God. Knowing He is there, holding me and guiding me through this journey of life helps me get through each day with ease. Everyone makes mistakes, everyone gets anxious... how you cope is what defines your true character. I will always go to God.



Brittany lives in Palos Verdes with her younger brother, Leonardo. She loves to read, write, exercise, socialize and be outdoors. Her ultimate goal is to become an attorney. She has been a part of the St. Francis church family since she was a young child.

Saturday March 26

Gen. 47:27-48:7, Psalm 136, 1 Cor. 10:1-13, Mark 7:1-23

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.” Psalm 136:1-3

Psalm 136 is so nice to hear and spoke to my beliefs and the central focus of my faith: “His Love endures forever.” I believe this and it is the reason I continue to follow in and believe in Christ. I love this Psalm because it goes through different scenarios of things that have happened and it points out that, above all else, His Love will continue to endure forever. That is so comforting for Christianity to know that the Lord’s Love of us and His forgiveness of our sins will endure. It is like saying “Mike, don’t worry, I have your back!” That is what I love most about this Psalm. Granted, the purpose of the Psalms was to give us poems and sayings to bow to in worship, but I absolutely love this Psalm because of the comfort and support it provides to my core belief. It is God’s promise to us and the covenant in which I believe.



Michael Metzroth and his wife Alyce have been married for 19 years and have been part of St. Francis Church since July 2016. Alyce is on the Vestry and helps with the St. Luke’s Food for the Homeless. Michael enjoys making sandwiches for the St. Luke’s food drives and would like to travel to London in 2022.

Sunday, March 27

...Where there is darkness,
(let me sow) light;
and where there is
sadness, joy.



Monday, March 28

Gen. 49:1-28, Psalm 89:19-52, 1 Cor. 10:14-11:1, Mark 7:24-37

“He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”).” Mark 7:34

What comes to mind when you hear the command “Be opened!”?

Lest you breeze by that question in an eager attempt to read this devotional quickly so you can get on with your day, I ask again: What comes to mind when you hear this being commanded of you: “Be opened!”?

How does this command relate to your life? Are you closed off in some capacity? If so, to what? To love? Forgiveness? Prayer? To God? To mending a relationship? To forging new ones? To pursuing a different direction in life and/or career? To trying something new? To implementing a new practice? To stepping outside of your comfort zone? To responding to the nudge of the Holy Spirit? To putting your trust in Him?

Listening to the simple command “Be opened!” can be so freeing, like ordering a “release” of whatever you are allowing to bind you, preventing you from living your best life and being all that God has created you to be. What are you holding on to that He’s asking you to let go of? Security? Comfort? Bitterness? Resentment? Anger? Disappointment? Indifference?

And what is holding you back? Is it pride? Stubbornness? Fear? Doubt? Laziness? Uncertainty? Lack of motivation? Lack of money, lack of faith, lack of confidence, lack of time, lack of resources, lack of “connections?” The list of reasons and excuses can go on, but instead, let’s shift the focus back to being opened.

What is God beckoning you to be open to? How might your life change if you allow yourself to be opened by God? What is waiting for you on the other side of surrender? If you are placing limitations on yourself or simply getting in your own way, may this passage inspire you to be opened and free!



Kristina Pelá and Fabrizio have been members of St. Francis for more than 20 years. Kristina is grateful for the many ways God has nudged her to be opened to stepping outside of her comfort zone, which has resulted in her leading the J2A high school youth group, serving on Vestry, leading Intercessory Prayer and, most recently, serving as Pastoral Care Shepherd and Ministry Council Lead.

Tuesday, March 29

Gen. 49:29-50:14, Psalm 94, 1 Cor. 11:17-34, Mark 8:1-10

Reflections on Mark 8:1-10 and Psalm 94

Today's selection from Mark's Gospel discloses the familiar miracle of the loaves and fishes. After a crowd of about four thousand stays with Jesus for three days, He has compassion for them, not wanting to send them away hungry, lest some of them grow faint on their way home. His disciples gather up seven loaves of bread and "a few" fishes, and, after Jesus gives thanks, they are distributed to the people. Not only does everyone eat his or her fill, seven basketsful of scraps are left over. To a reader's logical mind this, and Jesus' other miracles, may seem to be improbable.

So how can learning about the miracles enrich our lives today? The Psalms often relate reassuring viewpoints that are Old Testament accounts of God's Love and caring for his creation (us) and are precursors of that Love made manifest in Jesus. We, too, can feel cared for and see small "miraculous" events in our own lives if we can become very still and just listen during our times of prayer. The promises in today's Psalm tell of the Lord's intimate understanding of all those who trust in Him: "He that planted the ear, does he not hear? He that formed the eye, does he not see?" "The Lord knows our human thoughts. . ." "The Lord will not abandon his people. . .", and "Happy are they whom you instruct, O Lord!"

We humans are very good at worrying and trying to solve life's problems on our own, but we really do have God's help if we can back off long enough to wait for it. We are also warned later in the Bible not to fret, for it "only leads to evil." If we can truly, quietly trust in God's help, we, too, can say like the Psalmist: "The Lord has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my trust."

I can testify to the fact that, "As often as I said, 'My foot has slipped,' your love, O Lord, has upheld me." It's not easy to calm our busy minds, but miracles are possible if we wait for them and then give thanks.



Laurie Anderson has been a member of St. Francis for about 20 years, has served on the vestry twice and is a Reader and Chalice Bearer at the 8:00 services. Her two sons and their families live in San Jose, and, sadly, her husband of 57 years, Keith, passed away in April 2021 because of being afflicted with dementia for several years

Wednesday, March 30

Gen. 50:15-26, Ps. 119:121-144, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, Mark 8:11-26

(Scholars disagree on this Psalm's authorship, and it is believed to reflect the experiences of its authors over a long period of time. Psalm 119 is not only the longest prayer in the Bible, it is longer than any chapter in the entire Bible.)

The Psalmist prays that the Lord "...leave me not of mine oppressors," "let not the proud oppress me," "my zeal hath consumed me," and "rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because (mine oppressors) keep not the law." Even so, the Psalmist pleads with the Lord to teach His laws, loving them "above fine gold." And the Psalmist concludes that even though "trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet Your commandments are my delights. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; Give me understanding, and I shall live."

This beautiful prayer seems to describe the difficulties of one who is lost in a dense forest because there are trees everywhere! God is like the forest, and God has set forth His laws, but also challenges like the trees which abound.

This reminds me of my own experiences when I've been lost in a forest, often leading others. I have forged ahead, sometimes dropping into a ravine to avoid some brush, or ascending to a low ridge to get a better view. Too often this has backfired and made matters worse. But often I have ignored the directions that I knew would eventually lead me to a trail that leads out of the forest! I have chosen short term expediency over an ultimately certain goal. After years of hiking, I learned that when I have become lost, it's better to retrace my steps and go back to the last place where I knew where I was, then reconsider my next course of action. I found it better to admit a mistake and turn around and go back. And the sooner I admitted my mistake, the better for all, including myself.



Joe Young counts his friendship with St. Francis parishioner Gayle Taylor as one of his many blessings. They share many interests, especially reflecting on Biblical passages and their meaning today. They also share love for the outdoors, live theatre, travel, and space.

Thursday, March 31


Exod. 1:6-22, Psalm 73, 1 Cor. 12:12-26, Mark 8:27-9:1

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one spirit.... God has so arranged the body...that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”
1 Corinthians 12: 12-13, 26

Recently in my (usually lengthy) weekly telephone conversation with my brother, we were lamenting the worsening divisions in our communities and our country as a whole: seemingly unresolvable differences and festering hatreds among ethnic groups, races, religions, political affiliations, and ideologies that are greater than any we have experienced in our lifetimes. So the scripture from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians really resonated with me.

Paul wrote this passage to the church at Corinth because they were having problems with unresolved internal divisions, and with Divine inspiration he used the analogy of the human body to the body of Christ. To me this analogy applies perfectly nearly 2000 years later to our society. As Christians, through baptism, we are all part of one body and, as Paul says, should have the same care for one another within the entire body of Christ, no matter how large the divisions in our beliefs across congregations and denominations. But we also need to expand that same care to our communities, country, and the world at large, showing Christian love to all in spite of our differences. This is a huge challenge, not just overcoming our antipathy to others who do not think like us, look like us, or act like us, but also showing Love and care to all despite those differences.

When the difficulty in acting according to the Word of God becomes overwhelming in my life, I like to go to the Psalms for guidance and inspiration. Psalm 73 for today’s scripture says it all: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”
Psalm 73:26.



Suellen Eslinger joined St. Francis on-line in 2020 and became a member in 2021. She is a retired Aerospace engineer. Her principal hobby is music, and she sings in the St. Francis choir and plays the recorder. She loves learning about the Word of God and co-chairs the Adult Christian Education ministry.

Friday, April 1

Exod. 2:1-22, Psalm 107:1-32, 1 Cor. 12:27-13:3, Mark 9:2-13

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but I do not have Love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have Love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions ... but do not have Love, I gain nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

I have been thinking about ways to live my life in the present, as well as the ways I have lived my life in the past. I suspect we all do this, at one time or another, in one way or another. In the present time of my life of more limited physical and mental abilities and Covid-related more restricted options, I find myself struggling. One of the struggles consists of guilt for past missed or messed up interactions with family members, friends, neighbors or colleagues. Opportunities not taken, kindnesses not performed, love not shown and on and on. Someone said of his life, “No regrets, no remorse.” Well, I don’t feel that way. I do have regrets. Regrets which add up to a whole lot of negativity. One thing is for sure, this is not a good way to live.

So what is a good way to live in the present and future? In his first letter to the Corinthians, quoted above, Saint Paul described good qualities as well as actions that lack an important component. A few verses later he described the positive quality – Love – and how it can be truly expressed in thought and action: “Love is patient, love is kind, love is not envious, or boastful, or arrogant, or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” I would add, “Love acknowledges one’s own and others’ imperfections, failures and limitations; Love is forgiving.”

Hopefully with God’s help I can begin again to prioritize these positive attributes of Love in my thoughts and actions.



Patt Parker has enjoyed being a member of St. Francis parish for many years. She is blessed with two daughters, two sons-in-law and five grandchildren.

Saturday, April 2

Exod. 2:23-3:15, Psalm 108:1-6, 1 Cor. 13:1-13, Mark 9:14-29

“He replied, ‘This kind can come out only by prayer.’” Mark 9:29

Reading these passages made me reflect about how we talk to people and how we “talk” to God. The language we use when we communicate changes depending on our audience; our loved ones get a different form of address than a co-worker, a client or a stranger might get.

These four passages all have different tones. In Exodus, Moses argues with God, asking who am I to carry this message from you? Despite God’s reassurance, Moses tries a different approach and asks who should I tell them You are? And why would they believe me? Moses is transparent and conversational with God – he’s openly trying to dodge something he thinks is hard.

The Psalmist sings lovely words of praise and then at the last moment slides in “the ask” for protection. In Corinthians, Paul exhorts us that we must be in relationship with one another and God for anything we say to have real value – he says that without Love we are just a “noisy gong.” Finally, in the passage from Mark, the disciples cannot free a child from being possessed by a spirit no matter what they say. When Jesus frees the child from this possession, the disciples ask why they were unable to cast it out. Jesus replies that, “This kind can come out only through prayer,” showing us that the words of prayer have tremendous power.

I think that God is always asking us to be in relationship with Him, and part of how we do that is in how we speak to Him. During this Lenten journey how will we speak to God? Will we argue when He asks us to do something hard? Will we praise Him and then ask for what we need? Will we speak with the necessary Love to sustain true faith? Will we be blessed to be in a place of powerful prayer, grounded in a loving relationship with God? No matter what, we may rest assured that however we speak to God, He wants to hear from us and answer our prayers.



Holly Henebry is a long-time member of St. Francis and the current Senior Warden. She feels deep gratitude for the love, support, and spiritual nurturing that St. Francis gives to its members in abundance.

Sunday, April 3

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not
so much seek
to be consoled
as to console;
to be understood
as to understand;



Monday, April 4

Exod. 4:10-20, 27-31, Psalm 35, 1 Cor. 14:1-19, Mark 9:30-41

In the appointed passages from the gospel of Mark, we find Jesus and the apostles on the way to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man is going to meet His destiny of betrayal, death and resurrection. Jesus reminds the disciples of this future, but they don't seem to grasp it and don't want to talk about it. Instead, they have been discussing among themselves who is the greatest, perhaps fantasizing about Jesus taking over the world with them in tow.

So Jesus rebukes his disciples for magnifying themselves and has to set them straight once again by continuing to teach them about His priorities, especially striving to serve others, and welcoming “the least of us,” in contrast to what the disciples were focusing on. For the ambition to rule He substitutes the ambition to serve. For the ambition to have things done for them He substitutes the ambition to do things for others. And in doing so, He makes references to connectedness between people, people's actions, Himself, and ultimately God. Jesus teaches that “whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me,” and also that “anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name...will certainly not lose their reward.” A similar message is also found in Matthew 25:40 when Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

So, Jesus seems to combine the concept of serving others with doing so in His name, resulting in a connection to God Himself. Shortening and paraphrasing the message, “whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name...welcomes the one who sent me.” So, Jesus is really stepping up the importance of acts of kindness done to others, especially those most in need. These acts of kindness, that sometimes may appear trivial, done in Jesus' name, are essentially done to the one “who sent Him,” God. That seems like a pretty good incentive, especially for Christians, to make every effort to put His message of serving others into practice.



Fabrizio Pelá has been at St. Francis for 22 years. He and his wife Kristina enjoy connecting with the wonderful people of this blessed church community and receiving spiritual nourishment that helps to keep life's challenges in perspective.

Tuesday, April 5

Exod. 5:1-6:1, Ps 124, 125, 126, 1 Cor. 14:20-33a, 39-40, Mark 9:42-50

Our God is a faithful god. When we go astray, He leans forward and catches us. He is our protector. It is we who are faithless and always turning in the wrong direction.

The Psalmist asks, "What if the Lord had not been on our side?" Answer: "The raging torrent would have drowned us." Our help comes in the name of the Lord who made all things.

The things of the world attract us, and we give in to them. We like to see the magical lights of worldly things and we quickly abandon our faith in the face of idols. But what if our faith were constant? What if each of us were to bring forth a different aspect of faithfulness? Some would bring teaching, some would bring a hymn, others would bring revelations of God. The sum of these gifts would be a glorious gift to God.

We can do this. By the Grace of God working in us, we can be faithful not once, but always. We must not speak as children, but as adults. "Truly God is here among us."

Faithfulness is our calling. When trouble strikes, we must turn to the Lord because He is turning towards us, too.



John Dingee has been a member of St Francis for 19 years. He serves as Lay Reader for Wednesday services when they are held. He is also the Librarian. He gives thanks for his children Hal and Jennifer and his grandchildren Mike, Erin, AJ and Samantha.

Wednesday, April 6

Exod. 7:8-24, Ps 128, 129, 130, 2 Cor. 2:14-3:6, Mark 10:1-16

“This is what the LORD says, ‘By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.’” Exodus 7:17-18

We have no idea how long this plague lasted, but this — the Plague of Blood — is the first plague of ten in Exodus, with God sending a message to Pharaoh against Egypt, through Moses and Aaron. Such a dramatic event affecting mankind to imagine — the Nile turned into blood. Many other famines, plagues and events of pestilence are recounted in many books of the Bible.

As a very young girl, I remember my mother telling me about the relatives who had succumbed to the Spanish Flu of 1918-1920. It seemed such a dramatic event to me at the time, a virus that could infect the whole world at one time — a Pandemic. Could this happen in our day and age with so many medical advancements? I remember lining up for the Polio vaccine in elementary school, the Small Pox vaccine, and many others for foreign travel, all ways in modern times of reducing exposure to disease.

Fast forward to 2020 when we became aware of a new virus named Covid-19 spreading throughout the world. Was it possible we were heading into a Pandemic? It seemed almost surreal, and something we didn’t see coming. Regardless of the source of the virus, the virus continues to mutate; Omicron now, is Pi next? What we do know is that scientists very quickly developed a vaccine and other treatments. Divine intervention, perhaps? We don’t know what the future will bring.

But knowing that God loves us and will provide for us gives me faith and hope that we will “come out on the other side” of this Pandemic. Keeping our faith in these uncertain times and caring for those around us will make the difference. It has been difficult for all of us to not participate in our regular life activities, and some are more affected than others. Consider reaching out to an isolated person with a card or phone call that could brighten someone’s day.

Cheryl Gutierrez has been a member of St. Francis for 28 years. She and her husband, Hector, have one daughter, Sabrina, and are blessed with 1-year-old granddaughter, Isolde. Volunteering her time with the St. Francis Outreach Scholarship Fund is a special love.

Thursday, April 7

Exod. 7:25-8:19, Psalm 140, 142, 2 Cor. 3:7-18, Mark 10:17-31

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

I chose this reading, as I was looking for something positive and uplifting to reflect on; the Exodus passage is about the plague, the psalms talk a lot of evil, and, well, Mark was a little too preachy for me. The context of the Corinthians reading is Paul assuring the Corinthians that those who believe in Christ will experience God’s glory.

During Lent, while I am hopeful for worldly things to return to normal – full services, collegial coffee hours, informative Lenten suppers..., whether that happens or not, I intend to focus on the promise of this passage.

Paul refers to freedom where the Spirit of the Lord is. For me, this means that we all have access to the Lord, however we choose to connect. Lent provides me that prod I need to focus on that connection. He also suggests that we should contemplate the Lord’s glory with unveiled faces, which I interpret as being open to experience his glory – let go of the skepticism and questions about how He lets things happen that might seem to be ungodly, and see the beauty, love and glory that is all around.

Finally, I see this promise of being transformed into his image as the most important aspect of this passage – becoming more Christ-like, doing what Jesus would do. These are my absolute goals and I will focus on them (hopefully not just during Lent).

I will always remember one of Mother Sarah’s sermons from years ago, where she told her story of waiting in a checkout line and becoming increasingly irritated at slow checkers, those cutting lines, etc., until she took a breath and thought about how Jesus would react. Let me always take that breath and consider how I can help with the transformation promise!



Robin Pano has been a member of St. Francis church for over 25 years. She brought up her 2 daughters, Kelsey and Taylor, in the church. She enjoys serving at St. Francis and worshipping with our wonderful community. She loves sports and all types of activities.

Friday April 8

Exod. 9:13-35, Psalm 143:1-11, 2 Cor. 4:1-12, Mark 10:32-45

The first eleven verses of Psalm 143 spoke to me, as so many of the words struck my heart. These verses are a cry to God for help as well as for His understanding and acceptance.

I don't know about you, but I seem to constantly be asking God for something. Often, I tell Him I'm sorry to burden Him so much with my requests. Aside from asking Him to help others, I also ask Him to help me be a better person.

I grew up Catholic and used to think God had this long finger and was pointing it down in judgment of me. I was very fearful of Him and felt guilty for not living up to His expectations. Coming to St. Francis and becoming an Episcopalian, I realized that God loves and accepts me for who I am. He knows I am human and that I have faults. So now instead of feeling fearful and judged, I turn to Him for His mercy and marvel at all the wonderful things He has given me and my loved ones, as well as for the world. I marvel at sunrises, sunsets, the variety of birds, trees, and flowers, along with a myriad of other things.

I also do my best to trust in Him. Unfortunately, I often fail at that, so the last parts of the Psalm truly touched me: "Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love;" "Make me know the way I should go;" "Deliver me from my enemies;" "Teach me to do your will." After reading and re-reading these words, I decided to include them as part of my daily prayers. Though I am still asking Him for something, I believe with His help I will trust in Him and be delivered from the enemy within myself that tries to control things. Instead, I will feel His steadfast love and look to Him for the way He wants me to go.

May you be graced and blessed in His steadfast love and follow His will also as we journey through this Lenten Season and beyond.



Mary Ann Cronin has been a member of St. Francis since 1997. She and her husband have enjoyed the benefit of living in Palos Verdes for those years also. She is retired and enjoys cooking, golfing, crocheting and has made time in her life for relaxation and the simple things of life, the latter being a difficult task after working for more years than she can count!

Saturday April 9

Exod. 10:21-11:8, Psalm 42, 43, 2 Cor. 4:13-18, Mark 10:46-52

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

It has been rough going since March 2020. Even if we have been fortunate enough to avoid serious illness, we have helplessly watched COVID take loved ones, colleagues, Facebook friends, and strangers we know only from the news. If the relentless virus were not enough, we have witnessed unspeakable conduct by our elected politicians, insurgents and airline passengers. We have witnessed deadly attacks against persons of color, the deliberate erosion of fundamental human rights, and the continued mistreatment of our island home, Earth.

It is hard not to lose heart; our collective experience feels unending in its sadness. Yet the passage above comforts me and steels the ground under my feet. It reminds me that through all these devastating experiences, we by our faith know that there is an eternal reward if we challenge ourselves to focus on doing good and being good in what we can all hope is but a temporary moment in this earthly life. I think of this as the power of small, positive acts.

My wife and I unexpectedly became bird watchers several months into the pandemic. Sitting on our back patio as the world slowed a bit, we noticed the variety of feathered friends who visit our shrubs and blooming plants. Finches, blue birds, Black Phoebes (they snatch bugs right out of the air!) and hummingbirds made their way from tree to wire, from plant to shrub. We hung a hummingbird feeder. Upon witnessing a midair scuffle between two little red-throated hummers, we consulted Google which advised us that hummingbirds are very territorial, so we hung a second feeder. We hung a wild bird feeder on a tree and noted which birds tended to like which seed best. We ignored the squirrels who took more than their share.

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Saturday April 9

Exod. 10:21-11:8, Psalm 42, 43, 2 Cor. 4:13-18, Mark 10:46-52

Contd. from previous page...

We looked forward to the daily visits from the furred and feathered, noting that our hummingbirds grew emboldened, alighting on the feeders even when we stood so close we could hear the buzzing of their wings. Spending more time in this space, we found that this previously unseen beauty renewed our faith in the eternal.



Kirsten Goulde and her wife, Amanda, have been members of St Francis since 2013. In addition to her work with seniors, she enjoys singing in church and virtual choirs, and playing the cello. In her free time, she cooks up homemade sugar water for hungry hummingbirds.

Sunday,
April 10

... to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving
that we receive,



Monday April 11

Lam. 1:1-2, 6-12, Psalm 69:1-23, 2 Cor. 1:1-7, Mark 11:12-25

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

The past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused great anguish among all of us. As a country we have lost over 900,000 loved ones, and the world has lost nearly 6,000,000. But we have lost more than these loved ones; our way of life has changed dramatically. Many people are suffering from anxiety and depression as the continuing pandemic keeps families and friends apart, limits our activities, affects our economy, and fills our minds with fear of contagion.

Today’s scripture from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians directly applies to us in our current troubles. Paul expresses praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, and so we Christians should pray to God to have compassion on our country and the world, and to comfort all who are bereaved, anguished, or depressed in this time of our current troubles. But Paul says more than this. He says that God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others who have troubles with the same comfort that God has given us. Thus, as Christians we need to reach out to others in this time of pandemic to show our love and provide consolation to them just as God has provided comfort to us.

To me, prayer is the key to helping us follow God’s word, to helping us show love and provide solace to others even as we ourselves are in similar troubles. The scripture from Mark’s Gospel reinforces this. Jesus tells us “So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Let us work to make this so.



Suellen Eslinger joined St. Francis on-line in 2020 and became a member in 2021. She is a retired Aerospace engineer. Her principal hobby is music, and she sings in the St. Francis choir and plays the recorder. She loves learning about the Word of God and co-chairs the Adult Christian Education ministry.

Tuesday, April 12

Lam. 1:17-22, Psalm 94, 2 Cor. 1:8-22, Mark 11:27-33

“Does he who fashioned the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches mankind lack knowledge? The Lord knows all human plans; He knows that they are futile.” Psalm 94:9-11

This Psalm is, on its face, a call for vengeance. The psalmist calls for God to “pay back the wicked what they deserve.” We’ve all been in this place, wondering why people who do such great harm often appear to go unpunished.

It is easy in our own troubling times to lament the state of our world, despair in light of the cruelty we inflict on each other. And, while I’m not one who regularly wishes for old school, Old Testament divine retribution, I have my moments. Ultimately, though, I wonder if it is our business calling for wrath, much less pointing it in the right direction. Do we know, always and completely, who the wicked are? I am honestly more comforted by the middle of the Psalm’s rhetorical questions:

“Does he who fashioned the ear not hear?

Does he who formed the eye not see?

Does he who disciplines nations not punish?

Does he who teaches mankind lack knowledge?

The Lord knows all human plans;

He knows that they are futile.”

If we believe this — and I try to — then it releases us from the pain and anguish of seeing evil go unpunished. After all, God knows “all human plans” and all human actions, and God will respond. We are not asked to take part in this vengeance, just believe that the just and the unjust will be responded to appropriately in God’s time. To some extent, there’s the rub. As people, we tend to want justice quickly — after all, our time is limited. Knowing and believing that God will come to judge the living and the dead, as we claim to believe each Sunday, also means that we can find some peace in our time. It is neither ours to judge nor punish wrongdoing. We do what we can in our limited capacity to seek justice and promote righteousness, but we have to accept the limitations and know that God sees it all and has a plan. Our occasional flashes of righteous anger can and should give way to understanding and peace.

Tim Coleman is a teacher in Palos Verdes and has attended St. Francis for 7 years with his wife and daughter.

Wednesday, April 13

Lam. 2:1-9, Psalm 74, 2 Cor. 1:23-2:11, Mark 12:1-11

Psalm 74 is bursting with frustration. The Psalmist is thoroughly sad and disappointed at the state of the world, a world that has been created by an all-powerful God but is being defiled and destroyed by His foes. The Psalmist cannot believe how bad things have become and expresses his frustration even about God's inaction. Why does the omnipotent God appear to be ignoring the mayhem caused by His enemies, and their mockery, and not rise up to defend His cause and His people?

Haven't we all felt that way at times? Perhaps even more so in the past couple of years when witnessing absolutely baffling behavior, ridiculous pronouncements, and illogical directives by governments and citizens alike? Sometimes it's hard to believe how far off the rails things can get, it's hard to imagine how some people could believe such untruths, and it feels like it would be no surprise if God decided to show His might and step into the mess to restore sanity.

But He lets it all play out.

I had to read this Psalm multiple times to filter through the deafening noise of frustration, which comes across like an alluring invitation to join the Psalmist in expressing anger at the situation. Sometimes it's just easier to merely join and get lost in the lamentation; it might even feel good for a time to just complain. But among the loud cries of the Psalmist, one finds a message of faith in God, a God that "is my King from long ago; He brings salvation on the earth."

You see, the dire situation has not stopped the Psalmist from reaching out to God, has not shattered his faith, has not changed his belief that God will hear his pleas. May we all have a relationship with the Lord that allows not only for free expression of our thoughts and unavoidable frustrations, but also a strengthening of our faith and belief that, in time, His will be done.



Fabrizio Pelá has been at St. Francis for 22 years. He and his wife Kristina enjoy connecting with the wonderful people of this blessed church community and receiving spiritual nourishment that helps to keep life's challenges in perspective.

Maundy Thursday, April 14

Lam. 2:10-18, Psalm 142, 143, 1 Cor. 10:14-17, 11:27-32, Mark 14:12-25

“Share this bread among you. This is my body which will be broken for justice. Do this to remember me”

“Share this wine among you. This is my blood which will be shed for liberation. Do this to remember me”

As I did a meditation with a group of people and Rev. Jude Lyons, I realized that I felt we were having communion together. It was the “Last Supper,” and we were sharing it as those twelve had.

“The table is ready, all are welcome. Come, for the feast is spread.”

It seems for me, that anytime two or three people are gathered together, communion can happen. “When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we experience again the presence of Jesus in our midst.”

In the verses of Mark, we hear the story of Jesus finding a quiet place for a meal with the twelve, the Last Supper. These words I have shared are part of the Eucharistic Prayer we recite in our Nurturing Group. It is the same, just as we feel communion at church, we are all part again of that original Last Supper.

It seems one can have communion when we stay until the last moment of coffee Hour. Coffee and sweets are part of communion’s love. I feel love’s power, compassion, and concern when people are drawn together in community, unity, love.

As we go through the remembrance of Jesus’ Last Supper this year, may we feel the groups we are part of nourish and refresh us, just like that meal with the twelve. We can hope to find communion in all our groups, to strengthen others and that communion and community are in our world. As we travel and are part of other communities, may we show the power of love. Thank you, Jesus for that community and communion you gave us in the Last Supper.



Susie Zimmerman has been a member of St. Francis for 24 years. She is always looking for ways to remember our veterans, takes part in St. Ann’s Guild, ECW and the Nurturing Group, leads Meditation, and loves to sing in our Choir and at Taize. She loves her garden and traveling with her husband, Albert, to see their children so she can enjoy those nine grandkids!

Good Friday, April 15

Lam. 3:1-9, 19-33, Psalm 40, 54, 1 Pet. 1:10-20, John 19:38-42

By now, many of us are feeling pretty good about what we have successfully given up or added on for Lent, but on the other hand, some of us may be feeling deflated. Every year when I prepare for Lent, I think about what I can give up or add into my daily life that would lead me to a more Holy life. Is it something I think I can successfully do? What if I fail, do I fail in God's eyes? In Peter's first letter he writes about Hope and a call to Holy living. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, discipline yourselves; set all of your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be confirmed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct, for it is written, 'You shall be holy for I am holy.'" 1 Peter 1:13-16

It seems like a lot of pressure to be that well-behaved all the time! At times, I feel like I am doing fine, taking care of my family, volunteering in the community, being nice to the grumpy person behind me in the grocery check-out line. But sometimes that person behind me really gets under my skin and I am not so forgiving in my thoughts. Does God ask us to be perfect when he is asking us to be Holy?

God asks us to be alert and set our hopes fully upon the coming Grace. The word that stands out to me in this statement is, "Grace." We are told that God is a god of Grace. None of us would be saved if Grace was not in the nature of God. We are not asked to be perfect beings but to discipline ourselves and hope. Through this Lenten season I will try to pray with purpose and added a meditation ritual to move me away from distractions. Perhaps maintaining this intentional practice and ongoing involvement after the conclusion of Lent is what God wants me to do as He continually blesses all of us with his Grace.



Mary Deley and her family have been members of St. Francis for many years. She, her husband Tony, and her children Adelaide, Clara and Will have enjoyed serving the parish in many capacities. Mary has enjoyed being a part of the Ministry Council as Fellowship Shepherd for the last three years, serving on the Vestry, and helping with programs including Designs for Dining and the Antiques Show. She also volunteers for several non-profit organizations in the local community.

Holy Saturday, April 16

Lam. 3:37-58, Psalm 27, Heb. 4:1-16, Romans 8:1-11

*“I called on your name, O Lord,
from the depths of the pit;
you heard my plea, ‘Do not close your ear
to my cry for help, but give me relief!’
You came near when I called on you;
you said, ‘Do not fear!’ ”. Lamentations 3:55-57*

Early in my ministry as an Air Force Chaplain, a woman approached my wife and said, “I need to tell you something.” She proceeded to explain that she had been suffering from deep depression to the point where she was considering suicide. However, something I had said in a sermon the week before had given her the hope she needed to seek help and carry on living.

I wish I knew what it was I had said, but the reality is that it was probably something quite simple. The Holy Spirit used my words and spoke them into her life in such a way that she was no longer living in despair.

Holy Saturday is a day to acknowledge that many of us, myself included, often live with periods of deep sadness and depression. It can be debilitating; we feel as if we are the depths of a pit and there is no way out. In moments like these, we cannot help ourselves, all we can do is cry out for help.

In Christian theology, Holy Saturday marks the time described in the Apostle’s Creed with the words: “he descended to the dead.” According to tradition, Jesus went to the place of the dead – the pit – and set the captive souls free from bondage. This gives special meaning to the reading from Lamentations: “You came near when I called to you.” Jesus draws near to every soul and lifts them out of the pit of death.

So, whether it is the pit of sorrow and sadness or the pit of death, we can have confidence that when we call on Jesus, he will bring us relief. He will draw near and say, “Do not fear!”



The Rev. Jerry Sather is Priest-in-Charge (Interim) at St Francis Episcopal Church. Jerry has served in full-time ministry for 33 years and recently retired from the U.S. Air Force following 21 years as a military chaplain. He and his wife, Annette, have three adult children and a granddaughter living in California.

Easter Sunday,
April 17

...it is in pardoning
that we are pardoned
and it is in dying
that we are born
to eternal life.



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Sunday Quotes - The Prayer of St. Francis

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