



WHO AM I?

A Lenten Devotional



FROM ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Introduction

Through these daily devotions and a preaching series, we'll consider the tension between our deepest longings and our created purpose, the ways we define ourselves and the ways God reshapes us. As we journey through this season, we'll confront the paradox of human frailty and divine love, seeking clarity as we make our way through the wilderness of self-understanding.

Of course, there's no single answer to the question, "Who am I?" So, we'll look to Scripture to explore six facets of our identity in relationship with God and one another:

- I am powerless to defeat sin and evil.
- I am God's own.
- I am precious and worthy of redemption.
- I am a reconciled reconciler.
- I am ready for resurrection.
- I am a pilgrim on the way of the cross.

We hope you'll make this devotional guide part of your daily practice this Lent. For each day, we've offered a brief reading and a rich question or two. Together, we'll let God's Word dwell in us richly through this season of self-examination and repentance, trusting the Spirit to guide each of us where we need to go.

— *Fr. John Spicer, Mtr. Jean Long, Mtr. Rita Kendagor, Mtr. Anne Hutcherson, Deacon Adam James, and Archdeacon Bruce Bower*

Week One: I am powerless to defeat sin and evil.

(Ash Wednesday, March 5 - March 15)

Ash Wednesday, March 5

1 Peter 2:23-25: When Jesus was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

As we receive ashes on our foreheads today, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey of self-understanding that begins with remembering how Jesus understood himself: as the shepherd who gives himself to free us from sin (separation from God) for righteousness (relationship with God) instead. This Lent, what separation from God do you need to ask Jesus to heal? – *Fr. John*

Thursday, March 6

Romans 5:6-8: For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Righteousness can give me the false assurance that I can rise above sin by my own effort. But goodness is an act of surrender—found not in denying my weaknesses and sins, but in the humility to acknowledge them and allow God to transform me from within.

Where in my life do I mistake my own moral effort for true transformation, rather than surrendering to the deeper transformation that only God can bring? – *Mtr. Jean*

Friday, March 7

Romans 3:9b-12: All, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: “There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one.”

It may be hard to accept, but no one, regardless of ethnicity or background, is exempt from sin or can achieve righteousness on their own. We and all of humankind require divine intervention for salvation. We begin by

acknowledging our sins, faults and shortcomings and then praying for God's understanding and forgiveness. Then it's time to initiate positive movement away from sin. What actions might you take today? – *Dcn. Bruce*

Saturday, March 8

James 4:4,7-8: Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ... Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Aren't you glad the word "frenemy" isn't in the Bible? (Frenemy, according to the Oxford Languages dictionary means: a person with whom one is friendly despite a fundamental dislike or rivalry.) The word frenemy gives us permission to straddle the fence, so to speak. God doesn't straddle the fence with us, so likewise, we are asked us not to straddle the fence with God. Either we are friends with God's way, or friends with the ways of this world. The Message Bible sums up this reading in verses seven and eight by saying: "Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him make himself scarce. Say a quiet yes to God and God will be there in no time." So, is God your friend or your frenemy? – *Mtr. Rita*

Sunday, March 9

1 Peter 5:6-9a: Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith.

Peter reminds us that true strength comes from surrendering to God. We must give our anxieties over to God, trusting that we are cared for, even as we care for others. This passage also reminds us to be watchful, for the darkness seeks to disrupt our faith and service. Through persistent faith and confidence in God's grace, we can resist temptation and encourage others to stand certain with Christ. – *Dcn. Adam*

Monday, March 10

John 8:31-32,34-36: Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.... Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there for ever. So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

As we share the “road” to Easter,” I think about how each of us may be asking: who is this Jesus for me? Today I remember a former teacher who ever reminds us that God is not God of only “white people or brown people, of Pakistanis or Palestinians, of Jews or Catholics,” (and we could certainly offer a continuing list). “God is the God of all humankind.” For many, that’s tough to swallow, especially given the state of our union! Yet we are reminded that “the God we call “our God “is either the God of all or cannot possibly be God at all.” The bottom line: we are called to accept a state of “smallness” amidst world greatness. (Mtr. Anne with help from Joan Chitter) Can you trust such greatness? – *Mtr. Anne*

Tuesday, March 11

Jeremiah 17:9-10: The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it? I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

As deeply as we know that God loves us, we also know that we can’t always trust our hearts. Like Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, we make choices that clearly lead to our own suffering, preferring Turkish delight to our family’s love. What choices do you make as a child of God that leave you shaking your head? – *Fr. John*

Wednesday, March 12

Romans 3:23-25a: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.

Every day, I fall short in both big and small ways. I have to remind myself that God’s grace isn’t about keeping score. In fact, God refuses to leave me, or you, lost. When I acknowledge where I’ve fallen short, there is a lightness that follows—a sense of restoration and recentering. This is why I pray the confession of sin daily. Not to dwell on my mistakes, but to step into God’s presence and allow myself to be fully known, forgiven, and loved. How might embracing the practice of confession during Lent help you experience restoration and recentering, allowing you to step into the assurance of being fully known, forgiven, and loved? – *Mtr. Jean*

Thursday, March 13

1 John 1:8-9: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth

is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I used to deceive myself that there was no sin in me as long as I hadn't gotten crosswise with any of the shall's and shall-not's listed in the Ten Commandments. Wrong. Sin is anything that gets between us and our relationship with God. We all need to look into our lives and take an honest inventory. Look for things like self-centeredness, judgementalism, hubris, ignoring the needs of others, dishonesty in our words, etc. What might you find? Do you believe God can/will forgive and intercede? – *Dcn. Bruce*

Friday, March 14

Genesis 3:1-5: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Ah, the story of Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. So much throughout the history of the world has been attributed to this story. All the way from the subjugation of women to the litany of rules surrounding sex and love. Yet the bottom line is – "to whose voice do you choose to listen?" – *Mtr. Rita*

Saturday, March 15

Colossians 1:11-14: May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

St. Paul's letter to the Colossians reminds me that I'm never facing life's challenges alone—I'm being strengthened in ways I don't always see. I have been brought out of darkness and into something so much greater, a place of love and belonging. Through Christ, I'm forgiven and set free, and that fills me with deep gratitude. Because of this, I want to walk each day with hope, trusting that love is always holding me up and renewing me. – *Dcn. Adam*

Week Two: I am God's own.

(Sunday, March 16 – Saturday, March 22)

Sunday, March 16

John 1:9-13. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

When I first read this, I had little to say. Minus the story of the birth of Christ, minus the arrival of Mary and Joseph, as well as the dramatic ending, the essentials are clear; the gift is ours to accept. Or not. What is there to explain? Yes, we nod our heads and gratefully attend the services and ceremonies. Yes, we know the stories of those in the beginning and those in the ending, as well as those in the new beginning. But wait! Remember that strange event when “he gave power to become children of God.” Let us drop to our knees and taste anew the glory of our God. Do you dare to live in the true light and will of God?
– *Mtr. Anne*

Monday, March 17

1 Peter 2:9-10: You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In our culture's rampant individualism and tribalism, our default setting seems to be a focus on “me” or “my kind.” But, together, we who are God's own comprise not just a collection of special individuals but a holy nation. And what marks that holy nation? Receiving God's mercy. As one of God's own, forgiven people, whom do you need to forgive? To whom do you need to show mercy?
– *Fr. John*

Tuesday, March 18

Romans 8:14-17: All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs,

heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

For many of us, the image of God as “Father” can be challenging—it may evoke pain or anger, especially when our earthly fathers failed to embody love and care. Yet, God’s fatherly love is unlike our earthly experiences. It is a love rooted in compassion, patience, and unconditional acceptance. This love is not about authority or control, but about guidance and care that heals, restores, and offers peace throughout our lives. How might you open yourself to experiencing God’s fatherly love as a source of comfort and guidance, rather than seeing it through the lens of past hurts or mistrust? – *Mtr. Jean*

Wednesday, March 19

Philippians 3:20-21: Our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Paul’s scripture serves as a powerful reminder that as believers, our true citizenship lies in heaven, not on earth. Day to day, it is easy to get caught up in our allegiance to our hometown and our homeland, but this can lead to an ‘us versus them’ mindset. I was moved away from this way of thinking during a trip to the Holy Land. There I experienced daily exposure to pilgrims from just about any country you could name. We weren’t Americans or Germans or Japanese or Nigerians. We were a brotherhood of believers all experiencing a perspective shift from earthly concerns to the hope of eternal life and transformation through Christ. How and when have you ever experienced the ‘big picture’ of your heavenly citizenship? – *Dcn. Bruce*

Thursday, March 20

Ephesians 2:17-20: Jesus came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Aren’t you glad God isn’t wishy-washy? And that there is no bouncer standing at the door of St. Andrews barring us from coming in due to our clothing, color of our skin, and whether we are LGBTQ+, or any other criteria? Peace is offered

to those who are far off, and that same peace is offered to those who are near. We all have equal access to our Heavenly Creator. Is there anything in your heart that causes you to be hesitant at offering peace to a specific stranger?
– *Mtr. Rita*

Friday, March 21

Psalm 100:3-5: Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

This Psalm of thanksgiving may sound familiar for those who practice morning prayer. It reminds us that we belong to something bigger than ourselves. We're part of God's creation, deeply loved and cared for. No matter what's going on, God's goodness and love never run out; they're steady and unchanging. It's a comforting thought that, through all of life's ups and downs, God's faithfulness keeps going for every generation. That makes me want to live with gratitude, knowing I'm always held in that kind of love. – *Dcn. Adam*

Saturday, March 22

Isaiah 64:8: O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

I assume I am not the only one with a hardy wish for praise when a job is well done—or even for attempting a challenging opportunity. Our Chiefs are not the only ones who are gravely disappointed when there is a “loss.” Since we are “the work of God's hand” I suppose it's tempting to blame God when there is a loss. However, the truth is that it's helpful to trust The Spirit within our suffering and disappointments, as well as in our achievements and joy. After all, the REAL WINNER is GOD, and it's our privilege to show up in God's game. Can you trust God even when you think the “game” to be in vain? – *Mtr. Anne*

Week Three: I am precious and worthy of redemption.

(Sunday, March 23 – Saturday, March 29)

Sunday, March 23

Genesis 1:26-27: God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In a culture that teaches us to measure our value by what we produce or by what we consume, the creation story is deeply countercultural. You are precious and worthy of redemption as your birthright, simply because you are made in God’s image and likeness. If that’s true, how might you speak to yourself differently? How might you regard yourself with a more gracious and generous heart? – *Fr. John*

Monday, March 24

Jeremiah 29:11-14: Surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Exile is not the end of the story—God’s love reaches into every place we have been scattered, every mistake, every moment of doubt, and gathers us back to grace. What parts of your life feel beyond redemption, and how might you open them to the restoring love of God? – *Mtr. Jean*

Tuesday, March 25

Psalms 139:13-16: It was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

As a proud grandparent, I frequently marvel at the birth, growth and development of my two young granddaughters. They are, very truly, miraculous and ‘wonderfully made’...and it is God who I thank. It seems easier to see God’s beautiful handiwork in others than for me to see it in myself. Take a moment today to acknowledge that you are a miracle and have been formed and loved by the one true God. Make it your regular practice to accept His love. – *Dcn. Bruce*

Wednesday, March 26

Isaiah 43:1-3a: Now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Sometimes words in the Bible can seem so distant from us. But let’s make this personal by filling in the blanks with your name: _____, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when it feels like you are barely making it through a deep river, you will not be overwhelmed. _____, when it seems as if life will burn you alive, the flame will not consume you. For I am the Lord, _____’s God, I am Holy, I am your Savior. – *Mtr. Rita*

Thursday, March 27

John 15:15-16: Jesus said, “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”

This is such a beautiful reminder that Jesus doesn’t see us as just followers. He calls us friends. It’s astonishing to think that we’re chosen, not by accident, but with purpose, to live out love and bear lasting fruit. This isn’t about trying to earn anything; it’s about living in the kind of love that Jesus shows us, knowing we’re deeply known and valued. That gives me confidence to step into each day, trusting that I’m not alone in what I’m called to do. – *Dcn. Adam*

Friday, March 28

Isaiah 62:2b-5: You shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken,

and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

War is over; peace can again be imagined. Maybe. The Babylonians have been defeated but there's unsteadiness throughout and restoration is on hold. There's hope, yes, but there are plenty of broken dreams never to be fulfilled, never to be forgotten. Questions abound. Is God powerless? The prophet calls for naming to ensure new life in a new identity. Such a status immediately brings us to current times of horrors. Our country does not suffer in the same way, but suffering is rampant here in America and in our own city. Attention must be paid, and the question is repeated: Is God powerless? How do we do our part for our world, our country, our cities and towns, and for the people without resources? – *Mtr. Anne*

Saturday, March 29

Ephesians 2:4-7: God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

We often think of salvation as something we're waiting for, a heavenly reward for having compiled enough good deeds on our life's balance sheet. But this reading sneaks in the present perfect tense in an important way: "By grace you have been saved." In other words, your salvation began in the past and continues in the present. If you're worthy of that even while being "dead through [your] trespasses," how might you extend that gracious love to yourself and others around you? – *Fr. John*

Week 4: I am a reconciled reconciler.

(Sunday, March 30 – Saturday, April 5)

Sunday, March 30

Romans 5:10-11: If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Being reconciled to God is not a one-time event—it is an invitation into a lifelong process of healing and restoration. Just as I have received reconciliation, I am called to be part of God's ongoing work of reconciling the world and so are you. Where in your life is God inviting you to extend the same grace and reconciliation that you have received? – *Mtr. Jean*

Monday, March 31

Colossians 3:12-15: As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

Here we are reminded that we are 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved', and then we are instructed to act accordingly! We don't exhibit kindness, compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, etc. merely to secure the gift of eternal life....but rather to gain the full benefit of that gift. These life-giving Godly traits can become natural to us over time....but we must work at it. Practice makes perfect! How might you exhibit Christ's love and values as you engage with others today? – *Dcn. Bruce*

Tuesday, April 1

Ephesians 4:29-32. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

With today's political climate, we are still asked to put away all bitterness and anger? Since this is April 1st, is this an April Fool's joke? The answer to that is no – this is no joke. Even with the current sowing of discord and contempt towards “the least of these” among us, we are told to offer words of grace to those who are listening. Remembering, of course, that not everyone is listening. But regardless, in the spirit of cultivating kindness throughout our community, what would it look like if you treated people the way Christ has treated you?
– *Mtr. Rita*

Wednesday, April 2

Matthew 5:21-24: Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So, when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”

This passage from Matthew challenges me to look beyond just avoiding harm and instead seek true reconciliation and peace. Jesus makes it clear that broken relationships and unresolved anger matter just as much as any outward offense. If I want to truly worship and follow God, I need to take responsibility for making things right with others. So today, I challenge you—from whom do you need to seek forgiveness or whom do you need to forgive? Take a step toward healing and let love lead the way. – *Dcn. Adam*

Thursday, April 3

Luke 15:20-24: The prodigal son went back to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

Honestly . . . I think it would be a “cool idea” to read this passage at least once a week—such an uplift to family and friends of ours. I remember the one time I was in trouble for disrespecting a parent. I was angry at Mom about some

disagreement long forgotten. I recall stomping out of the room, grumbled loudly as to how unfair she “always is.” I slammed the door as I entered my bedroom. Dad came bounding upstairs, quickly opened the door, and there I saw my dad carrying a “weapon” intended for my behind! First time I was to be “whipped,” Dad turned and said quietly: “You may NEVER again speak that way to your mother!” He added: “We love one another; it’s important to respect one another.” I never saw his “weapon” again. God’s unconditional love is comforting, but I have learned over the years that loving someone else with the same grace isn’t so easy. The question: do you have a Love Story that needs a tender adjustment? – *Mtr. Anne*

Friday, April 4

Matthew 18:21-22: Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, 77 times.”

As we all know, forgiveness isn’t one-and-done. Someone once described forgiveness as standing at the edge of a canyon with a pack of stones on your back, throwing one stone at a time over the edge. Depending on how badly you’ve been hurt, you may be carrying years’ worth of stones in your pack. For whom and what offense do you need to throw 77 stones into the canyon? Can you feel the pack on your back getting lighter over time? – *Fr. John*

Saturday, April 5

2 Corinthians 5:17-20: If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

In Christ, I am not just improved—I am made new. My past no longer defines me, and my failures do not disqualify me. If I have been drawn back into communion with God, then I am also called to the hard, holy work of restoring broken relationships around me. How does seeing myself as a new creation and an ambassador of reconciliation challenge me to repair relationships, even when it feels easier to let them remain broken? – *Mtr. Jean*

Week Five: I am ready for resurrection.

(Sunday, April 6 – Saturday, April 12)

Sunday, April 6

Galatians 19b-20: I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This Scripture teaches us that full faith leads to full life. Here is a prayer you might use today for yourself and for others: Holy God, I pray that you help me to live by faith today. I think about those of us who are walking through challenges and who hurt and suffer right now. Dear Lord, I pray that you would help us all to live by faith in Jesus who loves us and who gave Himself for us. Amen. – *Dcn. Bruce*

Monday, April 7

Philippians 3:7-11: Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Are you valuing something more than you value your relationship with Christ? Your career, your home, your car, your 401K? What would it mean to regard your things as “rubbish”, in order to know Christ better? – *Mtr. Rita*

Tuesday, April 8

Colossians 3:1-4: If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Here we are invited to set our hearts and minds on things above, where Christ is, rather than getting caught up in the temporary things of this world. It's a

call to shift our focus toward eternal truths and to live in the reality of who we are in relationship to Christ. This passage challenges me to rethink how I spend my time and energy, and what truly matters. Take a moment to consider how shifting your focus to Christ's life and love could transform your daily choices and relationships. – *Dcn. Adam*

Wednesday, April 9

John 12:23-26: Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

Many years ago, I enjoyed a friendship with a woman I named “Sister Let it Go” because she dared people like me to “let it go” when the unnecessary interrupted the necessary. She encouraged others to “give it your all,” and reminded us to love not only our neighbors but also ourselves. When she spoke of Jesus, “it was as if he lived at her house, drove with her in the car, and sat in the kitchen with her.” Sister Let-it-Go loved life, gave and accepted it too. Would you like such a friend? How would you enjoy her/his teaching? – *Mtr. Anne*

Thursday, April 10

Ephesians 4:22-24: You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

How do we change the way we act? Experts often say it's by changing the way we think. If we want to live in resurrection—in right relationship with the God whose image we bear—we've first got to let God work in us, renewing the spirit of our minds. If you thought about yourself and your life more like the way God regards you, how would you think differently? – *Fr. John*

Friday, April 11

John 15:4-5: Jesus said, “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

I can't ignore the fear and division I see everywhere. People are anxious, discouraged, overwhelmed. Some days, I feel it too. But Jesus doesn't call me to dwell in despair—he calls me to abide in him. Even as the world around him rejected his message, he stayed rooted in love. Abiding in Christ means allowing resurrection to take shape in me, letting it transform how I respond to fear, how I love my neighbor, how I engage with the world. When I cling to Christ, I don't have to be swept away by the fear that surrounds me. I can live as a sign of something greater—hope in the midst of struggle, love in the face of division, peace even in the storm. How can I be a witness to resurrection, showing love and hope in a world weighed down by fear? – *Mtr. Jean*

Saturday, April 12

Isaiah 43:18-21: Thus says the Lord, “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert ... for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.”

Isaiah's message here is one of hope and renewal, urging the people of Israel to “forget the former things” and look forward to a future where God is actively doing “a new thing,” signifying a fresh start and a promise of redemption, even amidst difficult circumstances. We are encouraged to let go of past hurts and to embrace the transformative power of God's intervention. How ready are you to relinquish control to 'let go of the wheel' and to trust the path God has set for you? – *Dcn. Bruce*

Week Six: I am a pilgrim on the way of the cross.

(Palm Sunday, April 13 – Easter, April 20)

Palm Sunday, April 13

Luke 19:36-38: As Jesus rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

Our fellow parishioners, Ann & Chris Holliday, went on a 15-day long pilgrimage last summer, where they walked 150 miles on the Camino de Santiago. I cannot help comparing their journey with Christ’s journey on that blessed Palm Sunday. Ann & Chris were walking an ancient path which many pilgrims had walked over the centuries. And Christ was riding a donkey on a very lonely Pilgrimage – even though he was surrounded with shouts of praise. As we begin our Holy Week journey, consider what your pilgrimage to the cross looks like. Are you journeying through this week in community? Would you rather breeze through the difficult days ahead and go straight to Easter Sunday? Notice at least one thing this Holy Week, that brings you closer to Christ’s journey.

– *Mtr. Rita*

Monday, April 14

John 12:3-5,7: Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” ... Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial.”

Mary’s act of anointing Jesus with expensive perfume is a powerful picture of extravagant love and worship. She didn’t hold back in offering something precious. This reminds me to give my best in worship, not out of obligation, but out of deep gratitude for who Jesus is. Think about your own acts of worship—how do you show Christ the value He holds in your life? And do you do so through your time, talents, or heart? – *Dcn. Adam*

Tuesday, April 15

John 12:35-36: Jesus said, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”

What happens when you walk into a dark room? Sometimes you trip over something on the floor, or you stub your toe, or you may even run into a piece of furniture. I challenge you – take the words of Jesus and apply it to your life today. “If you walk in darkness, you do not know where you are going.”

What pitfalls are you likely to encounter without the light of Christ in your life? – *Mtr. Rita*

Wednesday, April 16

Hebrews 2:1-3: Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

A seminary professor of mine used to say, “The symbol of our faith is a cross, not an easy chair.” One implication is that we are people on a journey with the One who asked us to take up our crosses and follow him. By definition, followers of Jesus don’t sit still but persevere in the race even when they might grow weary and lose heart. What weight, what sin, clings to you so closely that it impedes your journey? How might you lay it aside and ask Jesus to carry it for you instead? – *Fr. John*

Maundy Thursday, April 17

John 13:4-9: Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

On Maundy Thursday, we remember when Jesus washed His disciples' feet in John 13:4-9, showing us what real service looks like. He wasn't too important to do the dirtiest job; instead, He used the moment to teach us that love is about humbling ourselves for others. Jesus didn't wait for His disciples to earn His love, He simply gave it freely, showing us how to serve without expecting anything in return. When Peter didn't get it, Jesus made it clear that to follow Him, we need to embrace this kind of humble love and service. As we think about this, maybe we can ask ourselves—how can we serve others today the way Jesus served us? – *Dcn. Adam*

Good Friday, April 18

John 18:25-27: Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

I understand Peter more than I'd like to admit. There have been times I've denied Jesus—not in grand, dramatic ways, but in the subtle moments when I've chosen safety over truth. When I've let fear shape my choices, when I've held back who I really am, when I've stayed quiet instead of speaking with love. I wonder if Peter felt, in that moment, like he had lost himself. Because when I deny what is true—about God, about myself—I feel as if something within me has splintered, leaving cracks that I am not even sure God's love can mend. And yet, even here, Jesus does not turn away. He lingers in the places I most want to hide, not asking me to be unbroken, but staying—patiently, unwaveringly—calling me toward a love that has never been in question, except in my own heart. At the cross, Jesus absorbs the weight of every denial, every betrayal, every fracture of the human heart—mine included. If he does not abandon me here, why do I so often abandon myself? What would it mean to stay—to believe that even now, love is not letting go, that Christ is still holding me, and that I am worth holding on to? – *Mtr. Jean*

Holy Saturday, April 19

Matthew 27:57-61: When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

On this tumultuous day Jesus was abused, tortured and murdered by the hands of the state. His closest friends and disciples had abandoned him and were hiding for fear of their lives. When a wealthy follower was given the body of Jesus and took him to a tomb which this wealthy man owned, two of the women who had remained close to Jesus were there. Use your imagination. You are there at the tomb. It is a dangerous night. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? Write down these musings. What are your current feelings about openly following Christ? – *Mtr. Rita*

Easter Sunday, April 20

Luke 24:30-35: At table with two disciples in Emmaus, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour, they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The way of the cross ends in a surprising place. It turns out, the empty tomb is a stop along Jesus’ way the dinner table on Easter evening. He’d joined up with a couple of lesser-known disciples on the road to Emmaus, regular believers unable to wrap their minds around the possibility of resurrection until Jesus opened their hearts. Then he opened their eyes, too, through an unlikely medium: table fellowship. It’s there, in sharing bread and wine, that the disciples saw their Lord. Where do you see Jesus most vividly? At your family’s table? Sharing Bread and Wine with your parish family? Feeding a stranger in need? Where might you look next to see the reality of resurrection? – *Fr. John*



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