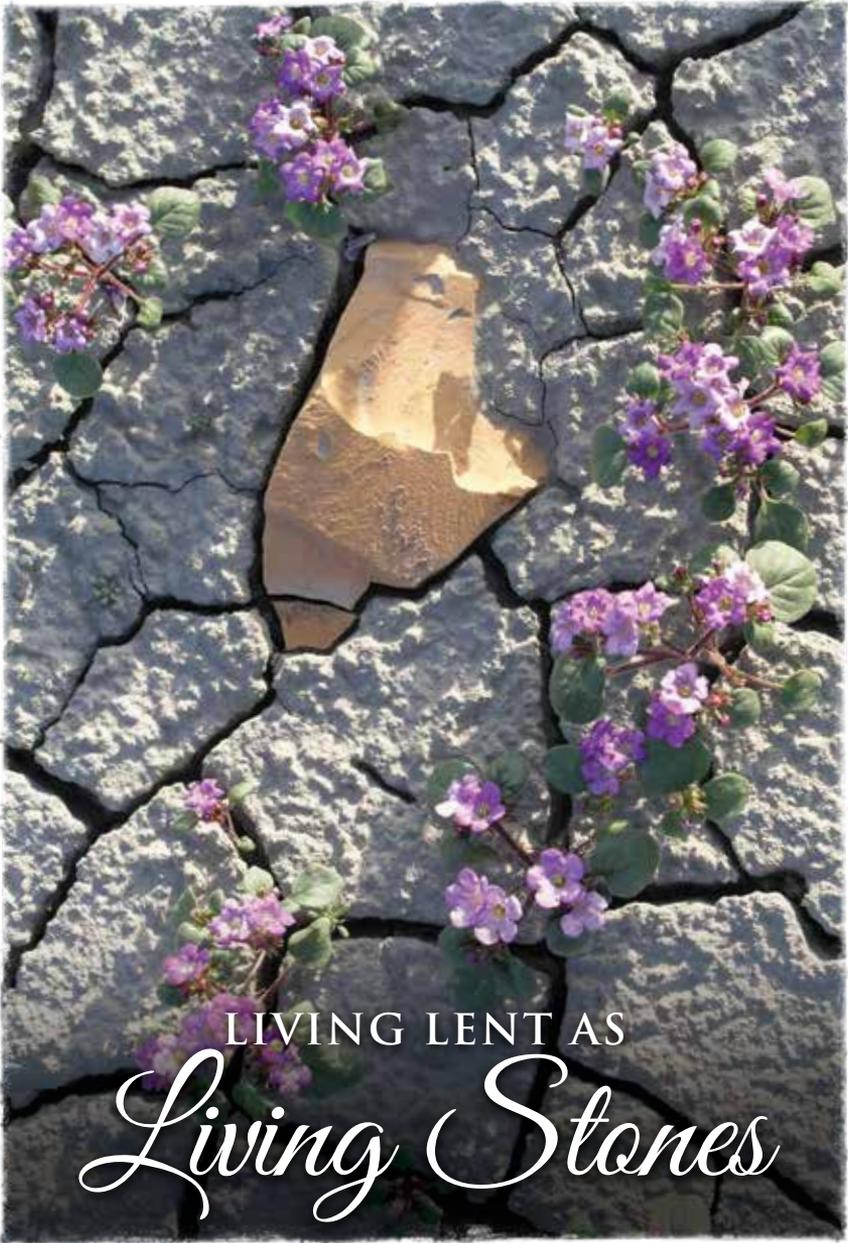


— LENT 2019 —



LIVING LENT AS
Living Stones



STORIES AND PRAYERS LOVINGLY WRITTEN BY PARISHIONERS OF

THE
CHURCH
OF **SAINT GREGORY**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DARLENE ŠARČEVIĆ MILAS

Introduction

*Come to him, a living stone,
rejected by human beings
but chosen and precious
in the sight of God,
and, like living stones,
let yourselves be built
into a spiritual house.
(1 Pt 2:4-5)*



www.google.com. Enter.

How to build a house out of stones. Enter.

About 4,440,000,000 results (0.58 seconds)

Build Your Own Stone Home!

How to build a house out of stone (for apocalypses AND fun)

Top tips when building with stone

Saint Peter did not have the luxury of over 4 billion how-to videos at his fingertips when he first wrote these verses to the early Christians living in Asia Minor. If he had, he would have learned very quickly—*building with stones is a lot of work!* “Living bricks” would have been a far easier, cleaner, and quicker means to building a spiritual house!

But, Peter chose stones. Perhaps because Psalm 118 referred to Jesus as a cornerstone (*the stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone*) or perhaps because Isaiah names Jesus a stumbling stone (*he shall be a snare, a stone for injury, a rock for stumbling to both the houses of Israel*) and early Christians would have recognized these references. Regardless, Peter takes these old-age references to everyday lifeless rocks and breathes new life into them. Jesus is *the living stone*—and those who build their lives upon him become living stones, too. How beautiful this Easter message of our faith—in Jesus, the lifeless gain life!

At the Church of Saint Gregory, we are witnessing firsthand the building process—the digging, the laying of a foundation, the laying of brick. It is an exciting time for sure. But, as we begin the season of Lent, we shift our attention even more so to the building of spiritual houses—both as individuals and as a parish. And with no how-to videos available to us, Peter’s challenge to build with *living stones* gives us much to work toward during these 40 days:

- † By nature, building with stones creates a strong, solid structure. But, each stone structure is unique as stones can be smooth or rough, big or small, colorful or colorless. So, this Lent, as a parish built of living stones, let’s celebrate our rich diversity so that we might embrace our unity more wholeheartedly.
- † By nature, building with stones is a challenging undertaking, as the surfaces of stones are irregular. In order to achieve a balanced structure, the bumps of one stone must be accommodated by the divots of another. So, this Lent, as a parish built of living stones, let’s lean on each other’s gifts and talents so that we might better reach out to those in need.
- † By nature, building with stones requires mortar. Since stones are unique and do not stack as neatly as say bricks would, gaps between them allow light or wind or water to flow through them. So, this Lent, as a parish built of living stones, let’s allow the Light and Wind and Water of Life to be the mortar that holds us together in praying, in fasting, and in giving.

Living Lent as Living Stones is a prayer for the Church of Saint Gregory offered by the Church of Saint Gregory. In these pages, stories of joy, fulfillment, and peace accompany stories of despair, sadness, and tension. In these pages, stories from beauty salons, kitchen tables, and dorm rooms complement stories from offices, hospitals, and court rooms. In these pages, stories of the young, the innocent, and the contemporary parallel stories of the young at heart, the tried and true, and the old fashioned. But, they are all stories of *living stones*—just like you.

As you contemplate Peter’s invitation to come to Jesus this Lent, may this booklet strengthen your faith and resolve to accept his challenge to build yourself—and our parish—into spiritual houses built of living stones.

A Prayer to Begin My Lenten Journey



Dear God,

I love you and I trust you completely. My life is yours to use how you see fit.

Please make me a channel of your peace.

Please help me to hear you and see you more clearly, everywhere I turn.

Please guide my thoughts and actions.

Please help me to shine your light on others so that they may feel your presence.

Please help me to love unconditionally, without judgment, but to know when enough is enough.

Please help me to hear my inner voice (that is you) louder than the random opinions of others.

Please help me to always remember that you are in control, love me, and will always do what is best for me—even if I don't understand.

Thank you for making me who I am today and who I will become.

Thank you for the enormous gifts you have given me so far, and

Thank you for what you will teach me in the future.

Please help me to live my life in a way that will grow my soul, so that I can be a contribution to others and someday deserve to be in Heaven and in your presence.

Amen.

MARIA TRAINO

Wife. Mother. Entrepreneur. Believer.

MARCH 6: ASH WEDNESDAY

*Even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning. (Jl 2:12)*

JOEL 2:12-18 | 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20—6:2 | MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18



Often, we find God where we least expect. In the details of life. In the silence between the sounds. The unsaid, the unstated, the ironic and the tragic.

As we begin our Lenten journey together today, we may have more questions than answers. We may need to find our own way.

Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving?

Humility, Patience, Silence?

Do the right thing? Do it the right way? What are we missing? Seeking?

A 1970's rock song may have the answer: "Oh won't you show me the way. Everyday, I want you to show me the way." (Frampton, 1976)

Prayer:

Oh Jesus, show me the way on our Lenten journey through Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. Amen.

THEODORE TOMASZEWSKI

Husband. Father. Physician. Musician.

MARCH 7: THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

*I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse.
Choose life. (Deut 30:19)*

DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20 | LUKE 9:22-25



Choices are what ultimately make our life. A myriad of millions of choices all stacked up that ultimately shape our experiences and guide us through this journey we call life. Many times when we think about the choices God wants us to make, we think about the big ones. What to do with our lives, where to live, who to marry, how many children to have... But I think when God talks about setting before us the blessing and the curse, it is not usually in the literal sense of choose life or choose death as in the one final absolute choice. I rather think that God is talking about the millions of small choices we make that either breathe life into or kill a small part of love within us.

We as humans, as children of God, are unique. We have the ability to know and love God and others and can choose to love, choose to give life to the world over our own biological needs. Without God, without love, our choices would all come down to our individual biological needs of nourishment and passing on of our genetic information. Without God and without love it would look very survival of the fittest with individual needs trumping all decisions. Love and community would have no place in such a world.

Loving and living with God is quite the opposite. In fact love is quite ridiculous in the literal sense. Jesus says in Luke 9: 22-25: "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." It is in this giving away of your life, one choice, one moment at a time and in turn gaining something far greater—life and union with God that this season of Lent asks us to think about and dive into.

Right now I am trying to write this piece and my gap-toothed bright eyed seven year old is fighting with and annoying his siblings when I have asked them for a little bit of quiet to reflect and write. Choice. I can get really annoyed here and blow up at all of them. After all... haven't I given these kids so much to deserve a

few minutes of quiet? Or I could pause and help them create a workable solution and breathe a little peace into a tense situation.

This is my life and I bet it is a lot of yours. Small choices all day long. Get up or hit snooze, prepare food (again) for growing/always hungry children or complain and tell them to get something themselves, listen to the question of your ten year old and really respond or look at your phone to see what that alert was, go back and give that requested extra good night hug when you thought you were done for the day with kids or pretend you didn't hear him, braiding your daughter's hair when she asks or telling her you don't have time, forgiving your spouse or holding a grudge, forgiving yourself and moving forward or despairing that you keep messing up, trusting that you are part of the beautiful love story of God or doubting if it is all some tale that we humans have made up to escape the harshness of our earthly existence...

It is all choices and the beautiful sureness of this life with God is that even when we screw up and yell or doubt or despair there is always grace and forgiveness and a fresh start. There's always time to turn back and choose life...

Prayer:

Dear God, You have set before us life and death. Help us to choose life,
to choose love, to choose You in all the decisions that come our way today.
Amen.

PATTY PIVIROTTO

Mother. Homemaker. Coach.

MARCH 8: FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

*You shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! (Is 58:9)*

ISAIAH 58:1-9A | MATTHEW 9:14-15



It is striking how the call to justice in Isaiah 58: 1-9 applies so directly to so much that vexes the world today. Consider the admonition in Isaiah against public displays of piety as the fulfillment of religious duty: “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own...” Today, 70 million people are refugees from their home countries, driven by poverty and oppression. And as the number grows the borders they face become harder. As an editorial writer, I see these issues every day in terms of public policy. And not all is gloom. Governments and public officials sometimes do answer the call—global poverty has been diminished significantly over the last 20 years, for example. State and federal policymakers have begun to figure out how to reduce the prison population, even though they most often are motivated by economics rather than by Isaiah’s call for justice. And here at St. Gregory’s and in the region generally, people take seriously the duty to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Yet the call in Isaiah for social justice remains loud and clear thousands of years after it first was made. We all have a role in answering it.

Prayer:

Lord, may your son’s example teach us to recognize injustice when we see it,
but more so, inspire in us the courage to act against it. Amen.



PAT McKENNA

Father. Journalist. History Buff.

MARCH 9: SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

*Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do.
I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners. (Lk 5:32)*

ISAIAH 58:9B-14 | LUKE 5:27-32



When I read Luke’s passage for today, the phrase “preaching to the choir” came to mind. I believe I have heard both Monsignor Louis and Father Lopera use it at various times and it seems appropriate here. Instead of just for the “choir,” however, Jesus is telling us that he is here for all of us. It is easy to have the choir sing a song beautifully, it is quite another task to get a raspy non-singer like me to sing beautifully. That is who Jesus is trying to recruit—the non-singers! Each of us has a voice that is beautiful in God’s eyes (whether it is to our peers might be another story). In other words, we are ALL God’s children. We are all loved by him, even if some of us may not yet know or understand this. Some of us may need more practice than others, but we can all be members of the same choir.

Prayer:

Dear God, help us to understand that we are all your children and that
you have a place for each and every one of us. Help us to look at those different
from us not with disdain or superiority, but with kindness and curiosity.
Help us understand how we are more alike than different from each other.
Help us to recognize that we are all members of your flock. Amen.



ANDY KUZMA

Family Man. Health Care Provider. Front Pew Sitter.



The FIRST WEEK of Lent

MARCH 10: FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days. (Lk 4:1)

DEUTERONOMY 26:4-10 | ROMANS 10 8-13 | LUKE 4:1-13



The year was 1964. I was in my third year at Marywood College. Fifteen years of Catholic education, with its heavy emphasis on sin and guilt, had begun to wear on me, causing my faith life to enter a wilderness and the Church to look like something that might soon be in my rear view mirror.

In spite of my feeling this way, I agreed to accompany my best friend to an evening theology course she was required to take in order to qualify as a catechist at her parish. Having gone simply because a friend didn't want to go alone, I expected nothing much from the class. Was I ever wrong! The professor, a very engaging Jesuit priest, broke open a whole new dimension of our Christian faith for me, one emphasizing God's loving mercy, not God's vengeful wrath. This priest became a mentor and a friend, opening my eyes to all of the wonderful things that were emerging from the Second Vatican Council, especially in the area of worship. He set a course for the rest of my life, including these last forty years that I have spent at St. Gregory's doing whatever I could, in big jobs and small, to build up and enhance our foundations in liturgy and liturgical music.

Prayer:

Lord God, Continue to surprise us with moments of grace, especially when we have entered moments of wilderness. Amen.



MARION EAGEN

Homemaker. Writer. Singer.

MARCH 11: MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

*“You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment.
Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty,
but judge your fellow men justly. (Lv 19:15)*

LEVITICUS 19:1-2, 11-18 | MATTHEW 25:31-46



On a recent Sunday morning, an older woman sat on the frigid steps of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. As we rushed up to get inside, she greeted us and asked for “a little something” to get a warm cup of milk. My husband said “On the way out,” and she replied, “God bless you.” Leviticus tells us God said to Moses, “Tell them...be holy...for I am the Lord.”

There is such a divide between haves and have-nots:

Help us be Your hands...for You are the Lord.

If we are not hungry, can we comprehend?

Compel our generosity... for You are the Lord.

Our comforts mislead us and shadow our sight:

Increase our awareness...for You are the Lord.

How easy to judge and yet not see our faults:

But judgments are Yours...for You are the Lord.

Prayer:

God, Your formula for holiness is clear: Put others ahead of ourselves. Daily we face moments to choose Your ways. A multitude of opportunities rest in each person, in every situation. How willing are we to walk Your path, to repel stereotypes, to turn from judgements, to act and speak for You? Put others first: so simple, and yet so complex and difficult! Amen.

JUDY BURKAVAGE

Mother. Grandmother. Friend. Parish Food Collector Coordinator.

MARCH 12: TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

*Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down
And do not return there till they have watered the earth,
so shall my word be. (Is 55: 10-11)*

ISAIAH 55:10-11 | MATTHEW 6:7-15



When I think of a stone, the first thing that comes to my mind is a picture one of those flat rocks that rises just above the surface of the water in a stream, the kind I used to jump across to stay dry when exploring outside. These stones always seem to be right where I need them and they help me in a really unique way. When I think of all of us as “living stones,” I picture something very similar: a community of people, each with our own unique gifts and talents, ready to help those around us whenever needed. We are like the rain and snow in today’s Old Testament reading from Isaiah. We are all sent here with the same purpose and mission of doing all we can for each other and our community, however, each of us has our own distinct way that we can do that. We are sent wherever and to whomever needs us and it is our duty to be that special living stone for someone when we get there.

Prayer:

Loving God, you sent us here on a mission to make this world a better place and do all we can for each other. Help us to recognize what we have to offer and give us the courage each and every day to use that to make our community better. Remind us that we are like rain and snow sent to water the earth with the ways we give of ourselves and, on the days when we feel like we have nothing to give, grace us with the acceptance that sometimes we too need to let ourselves be watered by others. Amen.

KAITLYN DAVIS

Sister. Friend. Student.

MARCH 13: WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here. (Lk 11:32)

JONAH 3:1-10 | LUKE 11:29-32



My one year old daughter loves to touch whatever she can get her hands on. From glasses to picture frames, from silverware to cell phones, she has a need to reach out, to touch, to grab. And despite my repeated warnings, more often than not, she goes for the things I would rather her not have. When I eventually pry them from her little fingers, water works ensue. Like most new parents, I have come to learn tricks of the trade to bypass these daily hysterics. One that often works in these situations is offering her something *even better* than what she's clutching. If I can convince her that her plastic, colorful fork that makes a cool sound when tapped on her plastic high chair tray is *even better* than my steak knife, there is peace. My daughter is happy (and safe) and my nerves aren't fried.

In today's Gospel, Jesus puts things rather bluntly: *this generation is an evil generation*. He knows that this generation, and those before them, have been warned again and again—by Jonah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and a host of other prophets. But still, they reach out and grasp their sinful ways again and again. Jesus desperately tries to pry them away from their sin by offering them something *even better*—himself. Putting it bluntly again—and likely causing many jaws to drop—he calls himself *even better* than Solomon and *even better* than Jonah. If they could but see him for who he is—not a prophet, not a sign, but the Son of God—there would be peace.

Though our generation, like every generation, still dapples in sin, we have a promise and a hope that the people of Jesus' time did not. We have the hope of resurrection, we have the promise of eternal life. May this faith shape both our Lent and our lives.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to turn always away from sin and always toward you. May I live my life in the hope and with the promise of living eternally with you. Amen.

NANCY FISCH
Wife. Mother. Sister.

MARCH 14: THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

*God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, blessed are you.
Help me, who am alone and have no help but you. (Es C:15)*

ESTHER C:12, 14-16, 23-25 | MATTHEW 7:7-12



It is very hard for me to ask for help. The tasks of my ordinary life can overwhelm me— the laundry, shopping, cleaning, homework, driving, cooking, working. I feel like a failure if I cannot not get everything done. I set up a wall of anger around me refusing to ask for or accept help. This self-inflicted isolation can make me feel so alone. This anger gets in the way of joy. It hides love and kindness.

I am not in the “mortal anguish” of Queen Esther, but I can learn much from her example. In asking for help from God and from others, I am putting aside anger and opening myself to all the love and joy that is present in my relationships. It is in our relationships that we become living stones. These living stones become the foundation for our families—our communities—our world.

Prayer:

Help me, see the barriers I put up around me keeping me isolated.
Help me, to remove these barriers and be open to God in me and in others.

BRIDGET WALSH
Wife. Mother. Friend.

MARCH 15: FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

*Since he has turned away from all the sins that he committed,
he shall surely live, he shall not die. (Ez 18:28)*

EZEKIEL 18:21-28 | MATTHEW 5:20-26



Ten years ago, over 6,000 miles away, God truly spoke to me. I opened the old dusty card—two decades old—filled with words of love and compassion from my wife of 28 years now. As I was reading her words of love, a voice spoke to me: “You must go with her to her home town in Italy.” One week later, I managed to do just that. A three week trip turned my thoughts to...*I need to get home*...and after just five days! One week later, feeling simply awful, out of my element, and bored, I was forced to go with her to San Giovanni Rotondo, the resting place of Saint Padre Pio. He was unknown to me at the time. When I saw him resting in his glass coffin, beautifully preserved, I became overwhelmed with joy. It was a day I will never forget! As soon as I got home, I went to see our beloved pastor, Monsignor Louis, and unloaded a lifelong list of unconfessed sins. I cried! On that day, I was forgiven by our Lord and I did turn away from sin. I became a better father and husband. I rediscovered a great truth and I remain spiritually eager to continually try to grow in faith. There is no doubt that this experience saved my life and my eternal soul.

Prayer:

Lord, through the intercession of Saint Padre Pio, you helped to set me on the right path. But I continue to need you now more than ever before.
Speak to me again during this Lenten season. Focus my mind.
Tell me what you want. Your will be done!

BRIAN PALMITER

Husband. Father. Seeker of Truth. Faithful Believer.

MARCH 16: SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

*But I say to you, love your enemies,
and pray for those who persecute you,
that you may be children of your heavenly Father. (Mt 5:44)*

DEUTERONOMY 26:16-19 | MATTHEW 5:43-48



In today's gospel, in addition to being called to “love your neighbor,” we are called “to love your enemy”!

Matthew also challenges us to learn from nature, observing how God shares the beautiful sunrise as well as the flood with both the just and the unjust. Judgment or the *lack of judgment* may be a first lesson in learning to love you enemies. The request to “pray for those who persecute you” is the second lesson, *mercy*. Pope Francis reminded us of this in his “Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,” a year of sharing acts of mercy with each other. So with a forgiving heart, lacking judgment and full of mercy, we are free to see God's perfection and presence in our fellow man or woman and them in us. We are free to establish connections and community as opposed to separation.

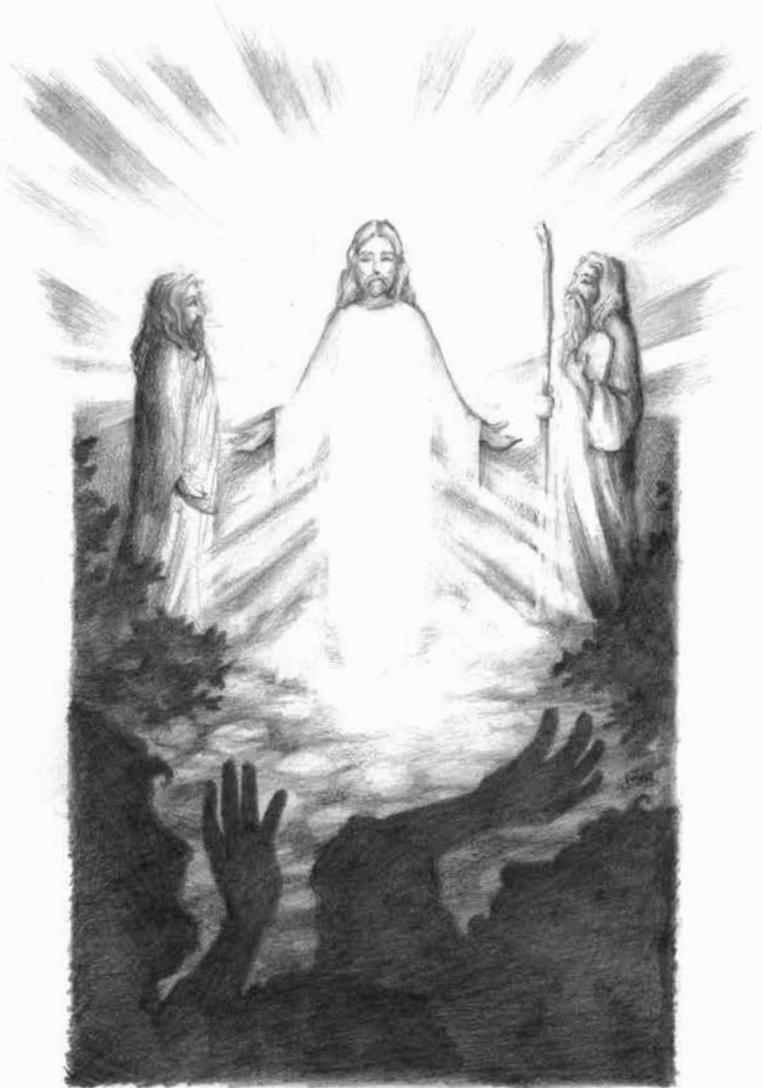
That is our journey.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to see your presence in ALL people, and help them see the presence of Jesus in us. Amen.

DAVID HEMMLER

Husband. Father. Eucharistic Minister. Church Decorator.



The SECOND WEEK of Lent

MARCH 17: SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

*Abram put his faith in the LORD,
who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. (Gen 15:6)*

GENESIS 15:5-12, 17-18 | PHILIPPIANS 3:17—4:1 | LUKE 9:28B-36



In the fall of 2004 I watched a documentary about orphaned children in Eastern Europe. From deep within me I heard a promise whispered, “Your child is already out there in the world.” I looked into adoption but finances and circumstances didn’t add up. Confused, I asked God the same question Abram asked in this week’s reading, “how am I to know?” and waited for an answer.

Earlier that same year, in August 2004, half way around the world, another woman gave birth to a baby girl in the mountains of Central Asia and then to another baby girl exactly one year later. Both girls would be placed in an orphanage in Kyrgyzstan in 2009. Meanwhile, in December 2009, my husband and I, fully unaware of the girls’ existence, experienced the grief and loss of miscarriage. By summer 2010, we decided to look into adoption again but almost immediately knew it was not the right time.

In 2015, we joined the Church of St. Gregory and at Easter 2016, I was confirmed into the Catholic Church with the support of my already-Catholic husband. We had no idea but simultaneously, on the other side of the world in Kyrgyzstan, circumstances had led to those 2 little girls becoming able to be adopted internationally for the first time. In June 2016, they even made their first trip to the U.S. through a host program, praying they would find a family as they did. Still unaware of them, my husband and I looked at each other one June 2016 evening and said what we felt in our hearts—“it’s time”.

Almost 3 years later our little family is complete with our two daughters, Elizabeth and Gabrielle, now 13 and 14, their adoption from Kyrgyzstan finalized in July 2018. Together the four of us often marvel at God’s timing, having experienced, as Abram later would, that His promises do not always come as quickly as we would like or in the way that we would have them. Sometimes we simply need to wait, even in the depths of our terrifying darkness, for God to pass like a flaming torch between the broken pieces.



*“Abram Counting Stars”
A painting by Gabrielle Novak*

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, give us wisdom to recognize Your will for us within our hearts’ deepest desires, to be willing to wait for You to fulfill your promises for our lives, even in the darkness, and to not lose faith when it seems to take longer than we would have it. Amen.

MELISSA NOVAK
Wife. Mother. Life-long Learner.

MARCH 18: MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

*Give and gifts will be given to you;
a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing,
will be poured into your lap. (Lk 6:38)*

EZEKIEL 18: 21-28 | LUKE 6:36-38



Sitting across from these seven courageous women, surprisingly, I was at a loss for what to say. I have taught mindfulness, meditation and its benefits countless times. Yet, this time I could feel my stomach turning with butterflies and my mind was racing with thoughts of, “Would they be receptive to what I had to say?” “They probably don’t want to be here voluntarily” and “This probably won’t mean anything to them.” I was nervous and conscious of the judgment and assumptions behind my questions. I took a deep breath and paused to open to this awareness, softening the critical voice aimed at myself and these women. I began the workshop and we meditated together making space for our fears, rejection, suffering, judgment, as well as ease, peace, and well- being. At the end of our time together, several women thanked me for reintroducing mindfulness into their lives. They remarked about the sense of ease and peace the time brought to them since overwhelming stress and upheaval are so pervasive in their lives. I was surprised by this - not the gratefulness, but the assumption that these women had ever encountered mindfulness before. In that moment, the smiles that hadn’t been present at the beginning and the looks of gratitude on many of their faces, reminded me of our common humanity, of our wish to be truly seen, accepted, and loved.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, allow my heart to be fully open without assumptions,
bias or judgment. To see not with my eyes, but with my soul,
the Christ within the other standing before me. Amen.

LISA RIGAU

Mom. Nutritionist. Mindfulness Meditator.

**MARCH 19: SAINT JOSEPH,
SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

*When Joseph awoke,
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
and took his wife into his home. (Mt 1:24)*

2 SAMUEL 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16 | ROMANS 4:13, 16-18, 22 | MATTHEW 1:16, 18-21, 24A



When I learned that I was going to be a father for the second time, it brought about many questions in my mind. “Can I care for two children?” “Will I love them both the same?” “Can we afford this?” As the doubt, and questions raced through my mind, I thought back to my father and mother. “How were they able to provide everything to me while making parenting look easy?” As I have experienced, it takes family support, “winging it,” and belief. Joseph could have easily dismissed the Holy Spirit coming to him in a dream as simply that... a dream. However, his belief in the support of a higher power allowed him to stay with Mary and raise his child. I believe that all parents need this support to survive all of the ups and downs of parenthood.

Prayer:

St. Joseph, you followed the guiding of the Holy Spirit in your life.
Help me—and all parents—to do the same and to remain open to God’s will
for my family. Amen.

MICHAEL LUKUS

Father. Son. Healthcare Worker. Volunteer Firefighter.

MARCH 20: WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK
OF LENT

*Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant;
whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. (Mt 20:27)*

JEREMIAH 18:18-20 | MATTHEW 20:17-28



Whenever I am feeling restless, discontented, or lost, I know the answer is always to go outside myself. Whenever I get anxious about “doing enough” or “achieving enough,” I remind myself that competition and “climbing the ladder of success” is an illusion, and the only real truth of this life is found in loving others. We are all called to be leaders, but the most effective leaders do not, as Jesus said, “make their authority... felt.” Instead, we are called to lead through service. We can serve with our talents and gifts; we can serve driven by feelings of empathy and gratitude. And many times, serving others simply means being present to them. Just being there with another, seeing them for who they are, and accepting them without expecting anything in return can be the most powerful form of serving each other.

Prayer:

God, give me the strength to look beyond myself and the clarity to know how to best help those around me. Help me serve others with genuine presence, compassion, and gratitude, without seeking any recognition in return.
Make me a true channel of your peace. Amen.



MARILYN PRYLE

Mother. Teacher. Writer.

MARCH 21: THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK
OF LENT

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose hope is the LORD. (Jer 17:7)*

JEREMIAH 17:5-10 | LUKE 16:19-31



I view my place amongst the living stones of the parish and church as integral to my relationship with my family, the community, and God. This relationship manifested itself during the critical illness of my daughter Bridget two years ago. Our family is so intertwined with our faith and parish, that my son, Robert, asked if he could approach Father Lopera to request an adoration. This simple request led to multiple prayer and rosary services to pray for Bridget's recovery. This overwhelming display of the love of Christ through the living stones of our parish still provides me with strength and comfort. I am convinced that God clearly heard the prayers and requests from these services. This tsunami of prayers was integral to Bridget's recovery and provided our family with the strength to weather this crisis.

Prayer:

Lord, please hear the prayers of your children and provide them with the strength and wisdom to follow your example. Allow each of us as living stones, to support the structure of our families, parish, church and community.
Help and guide us along the path of our lives and provide us with the vision to see your truth and love. Amen.



EUGENE FEENEY

Father. Lawyer. Lector.

MARCH 22: FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

When the LORD called down a famine on the land and ruined the crop that sustained them,

He sent a man before them, Joseph, sold as a slave. (Ps 105:16-17)

GENESIS 37:3-4, 12-13A, 17B-28A | MATTHEW 21:33-43, 45-46



In today's Old Testament reading, we find Joseph at the beginning of a long, dark journey. Severed from his comfortable life, betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, deposited in a foreign country and ending up in jail for a crime he didn't commit, Joseph must have felt alone—abandoned by God. I'm sure he asked, "Why God? Why me?" Many of us have gone through this Valley of the Shadow of Death, where we feel that we too have been abandoned by God. Some of us may still be there. But that wasn't the end of Joseph's story, and it's not the end of your story either. God had a plan for Joseph. Not only did God pull Joseph out of the valley, He put him in the highest position Egypt could offer. Joseph *had* to go through the darkness so that God could save his family and all of the Israelites. God used what man meant for evil to bring about good. God brought Joseph through the darkest of valleys and he will bring you through as well. Just be B.R.A.V.E. This is an acronym I read somewhere that has helped me. Perhaps it will help you if you're experiencing a dark time.

- B** Breathe. Don't panic or stress. God's got this. Just breathe and meditate on God.
- R** Remember. Recall all the times that God has come through for you/ for others and know that he'll do it again. Remember exactly who God is! Remember his promises.
- A** Ask. Ask God for divine intervention and His guidance. He not only has your answer; He is your answer!
- V** Visualize. Ask God to help you see your situation through His eyes.
- E** Encourage. Encourage yourself in the Lord, just as Joseph did. God will see you through.

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for examples like Joseph to remind us that you will never fail us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:8), that you are guiding us along the best pathway for our life, advising us and watching over us (Psalm 32:8). Amen.

JEAN AUBREY

Mother. Teacher. Optimist.

MARCH 23: SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found. (Lk 15:24)

MICAH 7:14-15, 18-20 | LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32



We've all heard the story of the prodigal son. The role of the father gives us its message of God's continuous mercy, forgiveness, and endless love. When reflecting on the actions of the son, I get a new and equally meaningful message. Although he was a sinner, I cannot help but admire his humility and courage. He was able to look at himself and recognize his sinfulness. Then, he mustered the courage to return to his father and beg for forgiveness. How uncomfortable! How painful! Yet, how brave! His actions force me to ask, "Do I see my faults and mistakes?" and push me to reconcile with those whom I have sinned against.

Prayer:

Lord, help me be like the prodigal son. Help me have the humility to see myself as I am and recognize my mistakes that have hurt others.
Encourage me to not only ask for Your mercy but also have the courage to approach others and ask for their forgiveness.

RUTH FRIED

Mother. Friend. Teacher.

MARCH 24: THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

*Sir, leave it for this year also,
and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it;
it may bear fruit in the future. (Lk 13:9)*

EXODUS 3:1-8A, 13-15 | 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6, 10-12 | LUKE 13:1-9



Regardless of time in history, life is fragile, temporal, and fleeting. We cannot buy time with or without good behavior. I experienced this first hand when I was 10 years old when my oldest brother—one of my heroes—died unexpectedly. Witnessing the faith of “living stones” in response to this tragedy colored my world forever. Luke tells us that death before and death after Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection are quite different in the sense of hope—hope based on *how we act* versus *who we are*.

The call to *repent* intimidates me. It feels like an Old Testament approach or legalistic attempt to gain favor with God. Outside of benefiting from natural maturity, I have experienced little success when I have tried to have a change of heart in my approach to issues. Towers do sometimes fall and tragedies still occur, but the difference *now*, after Christ’s resurrection, is that there is a master gardener interceding for us.

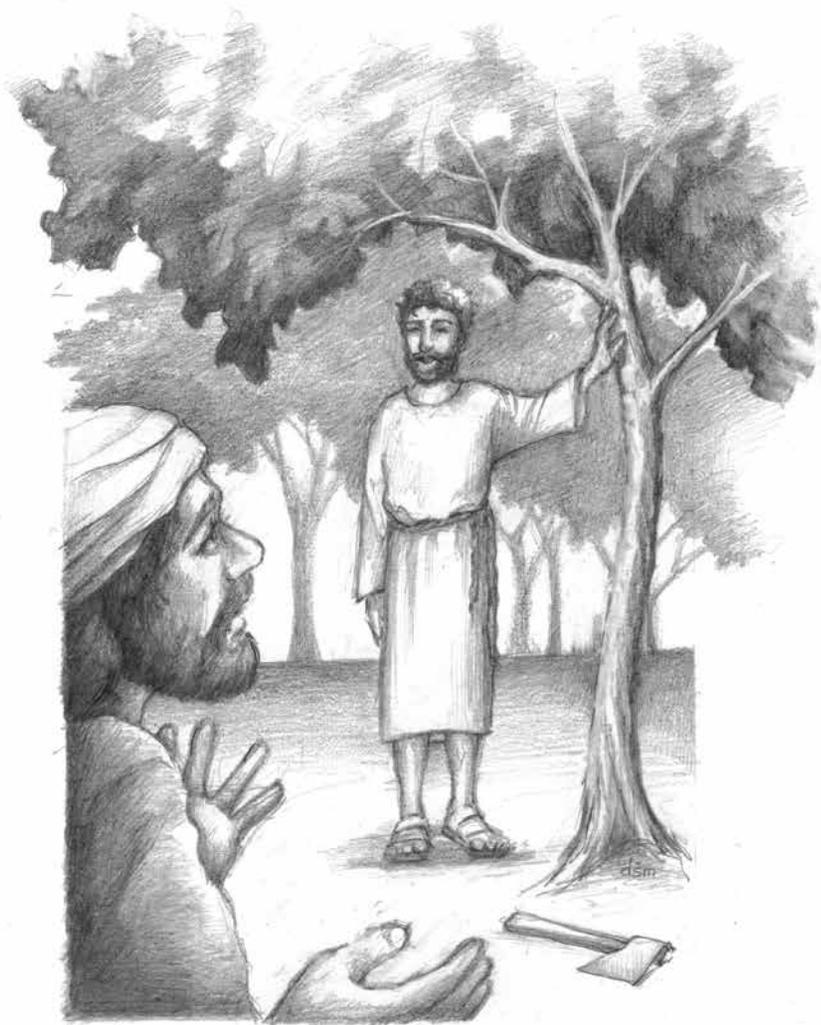
St. Paul tells us that “Christ is the fulfillment of the Law.” This is the key to open hope’s treasure. I now supplant the word *repent* with the word *remember*. We should all fast forward to what our last day on earth might be like. I hope we all can answer the all important question: *who am I?* To bear fruit and to truly live, I must answer this question of faith each day. We are not alone like an Old Testament worshiper trying to measure up to the Laws’ demands. Christ lives in you and me and our work is to be faithful and attentive hosts to Him. (Galatians 2:20) Do we believe that Christ lives in us?

Prayer:

Father, help me to be and remain in awe of your Love and Power. Cultivate my days and help me to put on the Mind of Christ so that I may truly Love. In this Christ Mind I will know who I am and that I am in You and that Everyone is One with me. Help me to allow Christ to live as me in this life. Amen.

JIM CALVEY

Husband. Father. Son. Brother. Employer.



The THIRD WEEK of Lent

MARCH 25: THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. (Lk 1:35)

ISAIAH 7:10-14; 8:10 | HEBREWS 10:4-10 | LUKE 1:26-38



Mary is given a great task, to be a mother. She is scared, troubled, and confused. How overwhelming it must have been for her! Yet, her faithful response is so pure. Without having all the answers, she simply looks to God and surrenders. God's great love for her is not in question. At times when motherhood seems overwhelming and scary this passage helps to remind me that it all comes back to Love. If I can trust in God's love for our family he will guide us through difficult times. Vulnerability is the reality of parenting and the heart of Mary's surrender.

Prayer:

Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, so pure and virtuous. Remind our family of the power of God's great love. May our children never doubt our great love for them as you never doubted the Heavenly Father's devotion to you.

As parents, flawless we are not, but loving we should be. Amen.

SUSAN STAMPIEN

Mother. Teacher. Volunteer.

MARCH 26: TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart. (Mt 18:35)

DANIEL 3:25, 34-43 | MATTHEW 18:21-35



Today's parable of the unforgiving servant brings to my mind a flood of memories from our OLP production of *Godspell* in 2014. In the show, the reenactment of this particular story is followed by the memorable tune "Day by Day." We all know how it goes "...Oh, dear Lord, three things I pray: to **see** thee more clearly, **love** thee more dearly, **follow** thee more nearly, day by day."

In my own life, I resemble the unforgiving servant more than I care to admit. In daily encounters with family, friends, students, choir members, and even strangers, I find myself lacking in compassion and forgiveness despite the unmeasurable mercy of our loving God.

Let's face it: forgiveness is hard work and sometimes people do things that seem downright unforgivable. But as living stones, we are called to share God's extravagant love and mercy with all our sisters and brothers, even when they annoy or offend us. That's no small task! How can we do it? Maybe a good way to start is to take a hint from *Godspell* and do a little bit **day by day**. Maybe forgiveness can become a way of life if we focus on **seeing** God in both the incredible and the mundane details of our daily lives; focus on **loving** God in each person we encounter, especially those whom we find it difficult to love; and focus on **following** God in both good and challenging times.

Prayer:

Loving and Forgiving God, you call us to forgive our sisters and brothers from our hearts. Give us hearts full of mercy and compassion. Give us hearts with love for ALL people, no matter who they are or what they do. Give us hearts that mirror your heart, O God. During these days of Lenten journey and renewal, keep us on the path to your heavenly kingdom, where we will experience your limitless love and forgiveness for all eternity. Amen.

MICHAEL O'MALLEY

Brother. Uncle. Music Minister.

MARCH 27: WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Jesus said to his disciples:

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.
I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. (Mt 5:17)*

DEUTERONOMY 4:1, 5-9 | MATTHEW 5:17-19



As a husband, father, grandfather, friend, and physician member of the St. Gregory's parish, I sometimes find myself thinking that I am more like a pebble than a living stone. But then, I realize that even a pebble when tossed in the water can create ripples. I know that what I say and how I act in my own very small world can affect the lives of others. Kindness and attentiveness to my family, my friends, and my neighbors can have a very positive effect on their lives, but often even more on my life.

When I reflected on today's Gospel, it struck me that Jesus revealed to us that he came to us as the greatest example and fulfillment of the Laws of God, the Father. Jesus teaching us how to love God is the fulfillment of the laws of the prophets. By following Jesus' example of loving God and our neighbor, we find ways of bringing ourselves and those in our small world closer to the Lord.

As a busy physician, I need to remind myself to slow down and talk with my patients about what is going on in their lives. I usually will ask what's new in their world. Sometimes there are wonderful stories they tell me, often relating the accomplishments of their grandchildren. However, there are times they tell me stories of great hardship or heartache. Crying and wondering what she did wrong, a wonderful woman I have known as a patient for many years told me of the recent arrest of her daughter for selling drugs. She is a widow and has no one to share her pain with. Another young patient was recently arrested for murder. He was electrocuted at work and developed cataracts and horribly painful injuries that caused him to seek drugs for pain relief that led him to taking the life of another person. How difficult the lives of others are makes my problems seem so insignificant. By listening and offering whatever help and consolation I can give them is what being a “living stone” means to me, always thanking God for the life I have been given.

Prayer:

Jesus, I ask for your daily guidance in my life. Help me to serve others in the way that you would serve. Let my hands be your hands and your hands be my hands. Please know that despite all my imperfections, I wish to someday be at your side.

JEROME JORDAN

Husband. Father. Grandfather. Friend. Physician.

MARCH 28: THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

This is what I commanded my people:

*Listen to my voice;
then I will be your God and you shall be my people. (Jer 7:23)*

JEREMIAH 7:23-28 | LUKE 11:14-23



What does it mean to be a living stone? Ultimately, it means sacrificing for those who have sacrificed for you. It also means devoting time for prayer every day, especially praying for those who need it most. Living stones do not always have to be someone with whom you are familiar. It can be anyone who crosses your path—someone who holds open for you or someone who shares a smile. No two living stones are the same and each one has an individual aspect that makes them who they are. Everyone God put on this earth is a living stone.

Prayer:

Holy God, make your presence known to me, through my worship,
my prayer, my study, and my relationships. Amen.

DAVID HAZZOURI

Son. Student. Athlete.

MARCH 29: FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

*And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding,
he said to him,
“You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” (Mk 12:34)*

HOSEA 14:2-10 | MARK 12:28-34



When I was in college, one of my favorite courses was called “Sacraments,” taught by a theologian named Bernard Cooke. I loved listening to him. He talked about how human love and friendship are sacramental because they are a revelation of God. The one thing I remember him saying over and over again, with his hands outstretched, was: “**WE** are the Kingdom of God.” It brought the whole idea of faith and sacraments and religion down to my level and to my world.

In today’s New Testament reading, Jesus is saying that we should love God with all our heart, that we should love our neighbor, and if we do these things, we are “not far from the Kingdom of God.” It seems simple, yet it gives us great power as human beings. It is a power that I think we, as members of the Church, often forget we have. All of the things that we do in our daily lives—the things that matter to us, and even the things we fail at sometimes—these are what make up this “Kingdom of God.” The Kingdom is in our kitchens and in our family rooms. As we sing sweet lullabies to our babies, as we hold our aging parent’s hand, as we cook and bake, or shovel snow for our neighbors, as we put in a long day at work or study hard for an exam, as we help a friend who is troubled or give to the poor, as we grieve for those we’ve lost or as we hit our knees to pray each night, we are building the Kingdom of God. It is right where we are.

At the end of each day, we want to know that we were a good friend, a good wife, or mother, or daughter. If we fall short, we try harder the next day. There is great power in our loving and in our trying. At its best, this is the ability we have to reveal God’s love to others, and to be a part of the building of God’s Kingdom.

Prayer:

Let us pray that we will support each other as we try each day to be a sacrament or sign of God’s love and friendship. Amen.

ERIN WALSH

Mother. Teacher. Eucharistic Minister.

MARCH 30: SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

*For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice,
and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hos 6:6)*

HOSEA 6:1-6 | LUKE 18:9-14



To be a “living stone” is the opportunity to be in God’s presence. All the activities in our parish—Mass, Faith Formation, parish events and meetings—speak to me of God’s presence in our lives. It is these experiences that strengthen his presence in my day. Surely in the sacraments we individually experience God, but in the community of the parish we experience a different relationship with God. These human and communal interactions call us to bring the experience of God from our inward beings to our outward living: to meet God’s family as God meets us, with charity, with compassion, and with love.

It is in these interactions that all the facets, all the complexities of human experience allow us to see the grandeur of God. Yes, in solemn prayer we can commune with God but God’s sending of his Son to us speaks clearly of God’s wish for us to be fully human. Charity, compassion, and love are experienced through interaction with others. As God is there for us, in all our successes and failures, in all our strengths and weaknesses, so we are called to be there for each other. We are called to help each other to build our lives upon the foundation of God’s grace as supported by “living stones”.

Prayer:

You are there and I need only to turn to you. Help me to see myself as a “living stone” in all aspects of my life. Help me to build my kingdom in you as I seek to build your kingdom in the world.

PERRY ROSE

Supporter. Friend. Apostle.



The FOURTH WEEK of Lent

MARCH 31: FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

*While he was still a long way off,
his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.
He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. (Lk 15:20)*

JOSHUA 5:9A, 10-12 | 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21 | LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32



My almost two-year old son, Patrick, has a favorite word: more. Whether it's a piece of cake, a push on the swing, a chase through the living room, or a simple beat tapped with a spoon, you hear his little voice whisper "moh?" without fail. But, even after every request of his is seemingly satisfied, Patrick often wants just one more thing—and it's an appeal that I just cannot ever ignore—"moh Dada." What he actually hopes for in this request is unclear at times, but he becomes happy if I just sit down with him, re-enter the room, or give him a smile. He just wants me close. And nothing makes me happier.

Since I have become a father, I cannot help but think about the parable of the prodigal son as a "moh Dada" moment. Like Patrick, the son in the parable seems to always want more—more money, more land, more pleasure. Even when all his desires by his standards should have been met, he realizes he wants—and ultimately needs—more. As humility and shame wash over him, I can hear him whisper "moh Dada." And the love, mercy, and joy so missing from his life are immediately restored in the welcoming arms of his Dada, who welcomes him with more than he ever knew he needed.

Is this not who and how we are as God's children? We too naturally want more and more, which is fine, so long as we come to realize at some point—we *come to our senses* as the parable reads—that what we should want and that all we really need is "moh Dada"—the closeness of our loving, welcoming, and forgiving Father. And nothing makes Him happier.

Prayer:

Loving God, you are all I want and all I need. Help me to seek you when I am lost and to return to you when I go astray. Keep me close to you all my days.

DANIEL MARX

Husband. Father. Teacher.

APRIL 1: MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

*Jesus said to him, "You may go; your son will live."
The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. (Jn 4:50)*

ISAIAH 65:17-21 | JOHN 4:43-54



Miracles are a phenomenon displaying Jesus' power over nature. Jesus performed miracles for Gentiles, the unclean, and the downtrodden—even on the Sabbath. The most captivating miracles in the Gospels are devoted to healing, and when this healing involves a child, they tend to become even more compelling. But, behind all of Jesus' miracles, faith in the key element. Jesus never performed a miracle of healing without someone believing that he could indeed heal. In other words, no faith, no miracle!

In places like St. Jude's Children's Hospital, or other children's hospitals, miracles occur often. The fervent faith of families generates hope to encourage the intercession of God's love to cure a child. Skilled medical professions, compassionate care givers, and even complete strangers who treat struggling families as their own create an atmosphere of promise. This environment of caring individuals is the presence of God's healing hand working through others to bring about miracles in our time. Certainly, not everyone experiences a miracle as profound as a healing, but everyone who is open to it experiences the warmth of compassion—and God's healing hand—in their lives.

Prayer:

Lord, let me be an instrument of healing, compassion,
and promise to a world that needs change and hope. Amen.

ROBERT BARRY

Kathleen. Erin. Peter.

APRIL 2: TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

*Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk."
Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked. (Jn 5:8-9)*

EZEKIEL 47:1-9, 12 | JOHN 5:1-16



Several years ago my friend Judy, asked me, "So Carol, how is your Lent going so far"? Wow, I was totally surprised and unprepared to answer her question. "I'm embarrassed and ashamed to say it's not going well, it's been a real struggle. I haven't been faithful with my prayers and fasting and I have not been to confession!" "I desperately wanted this Lent to be different, I was hoping for a spiritual transformation!" In her gentle voice, Judy, told me, "Just take it to PRAYER and ask God for HELP."

During Lent of that year, God did for me what I couldn't do for myself. God is awesome! His hand is always extended, waiting for our response. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "For I am the Lord your God, who grasp your right hand; it is I who says to you, "Do not fear, I will help you."

Prayer:

Father, thank you for all my blessings. Heal me from my wounds,
and open my heart to receive in your unconditional love and mercy. Amen.

CAROL CONWAY.

Wife. Mother. Eucharistic Minister.

APRIL 3: WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK
OF LENT

*Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb?
Even should she forget, I will never forget you. (Is 49:15)*

ISAIAH 49:8-15 | JOHN 5:17-30



Many an interesting conversation takes place in a salon. Just recently a client shared a quote she had heard many years ago from a very wise, old woman:

“When the Lord seems so far away, who moved?”

I could not help but reflect on those words over and over again. As everyone sits awaiting to achieve beauty, we share our joys, our hopes, and our dreams. But we also share our struggles and disappointments, our losses, and our sadness, and sometimes the deepest of our most painful heartaches.

Yet still...we “feel so alone.”

How appropriate the scripture...

For Zion said, “My LORD has forsaken me. My Lord has forgotten me.”

But our Lord answers..

“I will NEVER FORGET YOU.”

Prayer:

Please help me to *never move* away from Your Light, Lord, but only to *move closer* to your loving arms. May I always remember that in the depth of darkness, You are our Light, our hope, and our strength. Amen.



DEBRA J.

Mother. Nono. Friend.

APRIL 4: THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK
OF LENT

*I came in the name of my Father,
but you do not accept me;
yet if another comes in his own name,
you will accept him. (Jn 5:43)*

EXODUS 32:7-14 | JOHN 5:31-47



Today we live in an injured society, one where it is relatively simple to claim to be anyone you want to be. Trust is something that becomes more and more difficult to achieve with people each and every day. It would be naive to place trust and faith into just anyone. Jesus was aware that he would have many people doubt him or ask for some sort of credentials. He might not always get the back up or support from the people he was around, but he did from God the Father. Just like Jesus, throughout life, you're going to be questioned, tested, and tried. People will expect things out of you usually for the betterment of themselves. During those times, you must remain faithful to God and true to yourself.

Prayer:

Lord, grant us the strength to stand up for what's right and defend your name.
Amen.



LUKE WESOLOWSKI

Son. Student. Athlete.

APRIL 5: FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

*These were their thoughts, but they erred;
for their wickedness blinded them,
and they knew not the hidden counsels of God. (Wis 2:21-22)*

WISDOM 2:1A, 12-22 | JOHN 7:1-2, 10, 25-30



I have long held the belief that our culture paints an unfair picture of young people today. Having spent the entirety of my adult life teaching and counseling high school students, I have the privilege of witnessing powerful examples of their willingness to care for one another, their deep empathic understanding of their unique and shared struggles, and their humility in their efforts to share their God-given gifts with those around them. In short, kids today have an innate desire to understand and celebrate one another. They build one another up as “living stones.” Perhaps this is all the more striking when considering the fact that they are surrounded each day by examples of so many adults seemingly tearing one another down at every turn. One need not look any further than our current political landscape or the most recent trending social media post.

For me, the first reading speaks of the power of our unwillingness to simply understand others. It's about envy and bringing the worst out in others and in ourselves. During this Lenten season, let us pray for the peace of mind and clarity of thought to understand and empathize with others, to understand those who challenge us or who think differently from us. Let us be empathetic to the realities of their experiences and journeys. For along the journey, no stone is the same.

Prayer:

Lord God, give us peace of mind and clarity of thought to understand and empathize with others. Amen.

MATTHEW BERNARD

Husband. Father. Educator.

APRIL 6: SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

*But, you, O LORD of hosts, O just Judge,
searcher of mind and heart,
to you I have entrusted my cause! (Jer 11:19-20)*

JEREMIAH 11:18-20 | JOHN 7:40-53



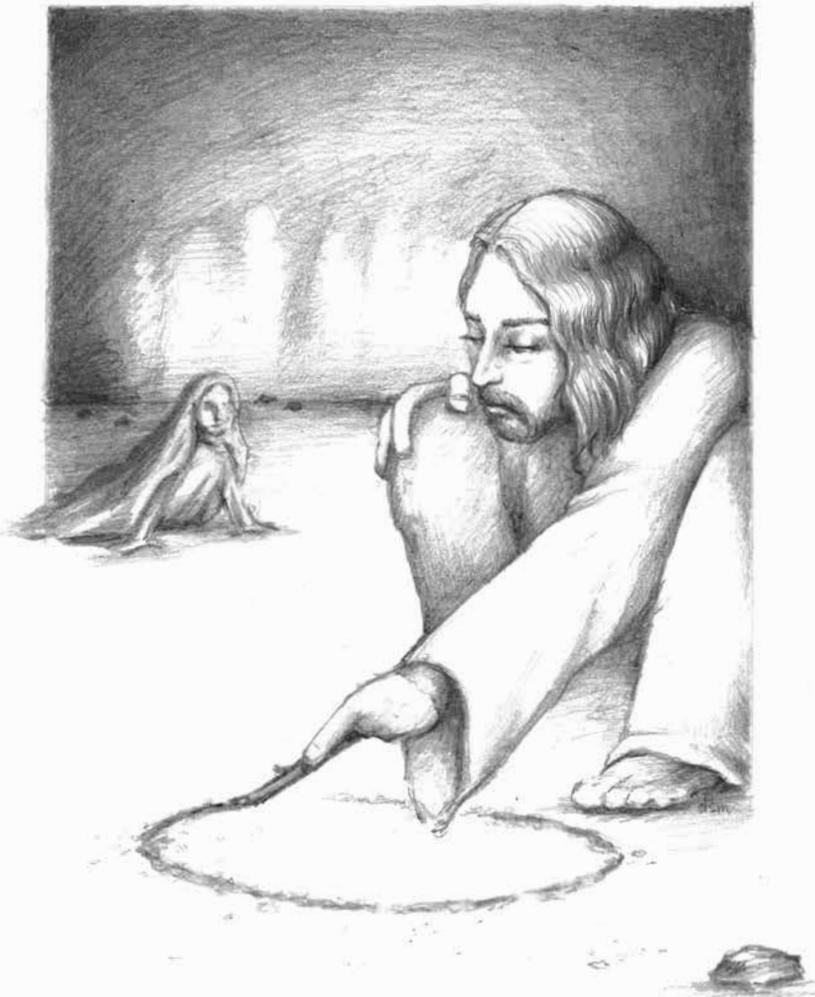
Jesus tells us He is the Living Water and He thirsts for souls and to follow Him I need to be a living stone, active Christian and follower of Jesus. Ever since I saw the movie *The Passion of Christ*, my thirst for Jesus has grown where I increased my participation in Mass, singing loudly and joyfully understanding more fully that Jesus saved us from our sins. The Gospel of John speaks of the division among the people which is so present as well today in this world as we have the choice daily to continue to thirst for Jesus and follow Him or not. Hence I do go to confession often! Jesus tells us the world hates Him and since the world is full of distractions and evil, I want to stay focused, mindful and present to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit so I listen to Catholic radio, meditate and Pray the Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy daily, wear Blessed medals, listen to Christian music and am a member of Altus, which is kind of a Catholic book group of very devoted faith-filled women. The more focused I am on the Trinity, the purer I want my heart, soul and mind to be so that as in Jeremiah, that when God searches my heart & mind, God will find Himself dwelling there and residing in me. At the end of this passage in the Gospel of John we are told they went each to his own house.

Prayer:

My prayer is that we are all in union with God and instead of each of us remaining divided, I pray that we stay in unity with God and follow Jesus by picking up our crosses daily, to be a light and an example for the world since we believe in Eternal life Jesus shows us how to get through this life if we too will follow the Way, the Truth and the Life and remain in union with God.

CHRISTA LaBELLE

Daughter. Wife. Mother. Nurse. Spiritual Coordinator. Catechist.



The FIFTH WEEK of Lent

APRIL 7: FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” (Jn 8:7)

ISAIAH 43:16-21 | PHILIPPIANS 3:8-14 | JOHN 8:1-11



Each Lent our family erects a large cross in our yard. We place stones at the foot of the cross. These stones help to hold up the cross. Moreover, they represent our sins. One by one, each family member lays our stones down at Jesus' feet to remember his death and resurrection for our salvation.

Most of us can relate to the different figures in this Gospel reading. I know what it feels like to be accused, perhaps falsely, to stand in the middle of pointing fingers. I have also thrown stones at others with harmful and judgmental thoughts and words. In the midst of the conflict between the accused and the accusers, Jesus kneels down and writes in the soil. I often wonder what he wrote. Perhaps a new law or reinterpretation of the old law which is mercy: “Love your neighbor as yourself”.

We are each called to lay down our stones of sin, judgment, hate and accusation, in part by recognition of our own shortcomings and faults. We are each called to know Jesus' love and mercy for us and in turn to show love and mercy to one another.

As living stones of God's church we are called to come “out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who *had not* obtained mercy but now *have* obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:10)

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to be a living stone of mercy and love toward others.

KIMBERLY KROSS-NOVAK

Mother. Physician. Veteran.

APRIL 8: MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

*I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life. (Jn 8:12)*

DANIEL 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 | JOHN 8:12-20



We already know this story, and we already know that it's about to turn dark and tragic soon! But, today Jesus reminds us that HE is the light of the world. There are those that don't believe his "unverified" testimony; and in the first reading Susanna is caught up in the dark and false testimony of others.

I often find myself believing the dark and false testimony that others offer about me: "he thinks highly of himself, doesn't he?" I know it's false testimony because it takes me to dark places of doubt and sorrow and loneliness. But I'm also guilty of not believe the true testimony that others offer: "he's kind, compassionate, and generous." I dismiss it as *their* kindness for saying such things. But I know it's true testimony because it brings light and lightness and joy: I stand a little taller, I feel the weight of sorrow and loneliness lift, and I can feel the warmth of The Light on my face.

It is a struggle to believe the true testimony and dismiss the false. But, in the shadows I cannot see those around me—neither those who suffer as I suffer, nor those who wish to ensnare me. But in the light, I can see those who will comfort and encourage me, as well as those to whom I can be a comfort and encouragement.

Prayer:

Lord, open the eyes and the ears of my heart and mind that I may see and hear myself as You see me, O Lord. Lord, give me a discerning heart that I may know truth and the joy of your Light, even as a struggle to walk away from the shadows that sometimes grip me tightly: the doubt, the sorrow, the loneliness. Amen.



JEFFREY SEYMOUR

Husband. Father. Teacher.

APRIL 9: TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

*But with their patience worn out by the journey,
the people complained against God and Moses,
"Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert,
where there is no food or water? (Nm 21:5)*

NUMBERS 21:4-9 | JOHN 8:21-30



Peace was easy for me to find in the journey of life when things were going as planned. When faced with disappointment, sadness, and death, I became as confused and as bitter as the Israelites in the desert. When my wife died at the age of thirty-six, I lost my patience with God. How could this happen to my wife, our children, Bob and Clare, our family, and me? Thankfully, God's patience for us is great. By turning toward God and accepting that the only certainty in life is God, I was able to find peace and happiness. Thankfully, now I not only share my life with Bob and Clare, but their brothers, Joseph and James, and my wonderful wife, Mary. As an imperfect living stone of our parish family, I recognize that my plans are not always God's plans, but God is always with us and our parish family.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for all your many blessings and please grant us the Serenity, Courage and Wisdom to continue to follow your will on our Journey of Life.



ROBERT SHIELS, III

Husband. Father. Lawyer.

APRIL 10: WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

*Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
who sent his angel to deliver the servants who trusted in him. (Dn 3:28)*

DANIEL 3:14-20, 91-92, 95 | JOHN 8:31-42



In today's first reading from Daniel, we hear the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego willingly being cast into a fiery furnace—a furnace “heated seven times more than usual”—rather than worshiping the god of King Nebuchadnezzar. Their undying faith in the one true God saves them from the fire, as Nebuchadnezzar comes to realize when he sees a fourth man in the furnace who “looks like a son of God.” Nebuchadnezzar himself then offers praise to God, who delivers the servants who trusted in him. God delivers those who trust in him.

This is a story of how living life as living stones can be difficult. Discipleship—living a life founded on the cornerstone of Jesus—is not easy. It often involves facing the fiery furnace. From supporting those whom society has cast out to respecting life in all its varied forms to loving those who hurt us, our faith should nudge us to step into the fire with confidence. Many times, we may even feel that we get burned. But, if we believe that God is with us and trust that God will deliver us, we, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, will be delivered. God will walk us through the fire so that we might continue to be living stones that build his kingdom, that glorify him, and that lead others to do the same.

Prayer:

Saving God, remain with me as I face life's fires. May I always trust in you. Amen.

JOHN ANTON

Son. Brother. Musician.

APRIL 11: THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

*I will maintain my covenant with you
and your descendants after you
throughout the ages as an everlasting pact,
to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (Gen 17:7)*

GENESIS 17:3-9 | JOHN 8:51-59



When I was 39, the very age my oldest daughter is right now, I was in crisis. My mother had just died, my marriage was falling apart. The very people whom I knew would get me through any crisis were gone. There were many days I was not sure if I was up to the task of getting five children through this time. One afternoon, I got in my car, crying as hard as I ever had and begging God to show me the way. I got a call from my son who told me my children were in a terrible way. That very minute I was transformed. I knew God had heard my prayer. I returned home that day and although it was a struggle, I never looked back from that day to what God had shown me. It was a covenant, much like the one God gave Abraham, only I was given these children rather than whole generations that include all of us.

Prayer:

God, I thank you for giving me the gift to hear you through the din
of my sadness. May I never forget the Grace I received that day.
Please continue to show us Your way in joy and in pain.

DMN

Mother. Grandmother. Friend.

APRIL 12: FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

*Even if you do not believe me, believe the works,
so that you may realize and understand
that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. (Jn 10:38)*

JEREMIAH 20:10-13 | JOHN 10:31-42



The Gospel of John shows the serious conflict that Jesus suffered with the Jewish people of his time. His popularity with the people was growing daily as word of his miracles was spreading. The Jews were losing their power over the people. As this Gospel story opens, some of the Jews had picked up stones to throw at Jesus. Jesus answers them by saying, "I am the Son of God. If I do not perform my Father's works, do not believe me, but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." Jesus was in essence telling them that he did not ask them to accept his words, but he did ask them to accept his good deeds which he performed in his Father's name. He invites the Jews to base their verdict on him, not on what he says, but on his actions alone.

Saint Ignatius said it over 400 years ago, "Love is shown more in deeds, than in words." Words surround us every day in this world driven by social media, but words are easy. Our actions speak louder than our words and our good deeds are the authentic measure of our faith.

Years ago, I went to a Mass celebrated by Fr. Henry Haske, S.J., The Gospel was Matthew and in Chapter 5, verse 48, it read, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Fr. Haske started his homily by saying, "God doesn't expect anyone to be perfect. He expects you to get up every day and give life your best shot. Be grateful, be kind, do nice things for others and God will be happy."

In this Gospel reading, Jesus asked to be judged on the good deeds he performed in his Father's name. Mother Teresa once said, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love." Jesus only asks us to perform small daily acts of kindness in his Father's name, and for on this, our faith teaches, we will ultimately be judged.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, may we have the courage to get up every morning and give life our best. May we be grateful, may we be kind and may we do small things with great love, always in your name. Amen.

TRACY BANNON

Wife. Mother. Volunteer.

APRIL 13: SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

*My dwelling shall be with them;
I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Ez 37:27)*

EZEKIEL 37:21-28 | JOHN 11:45-56



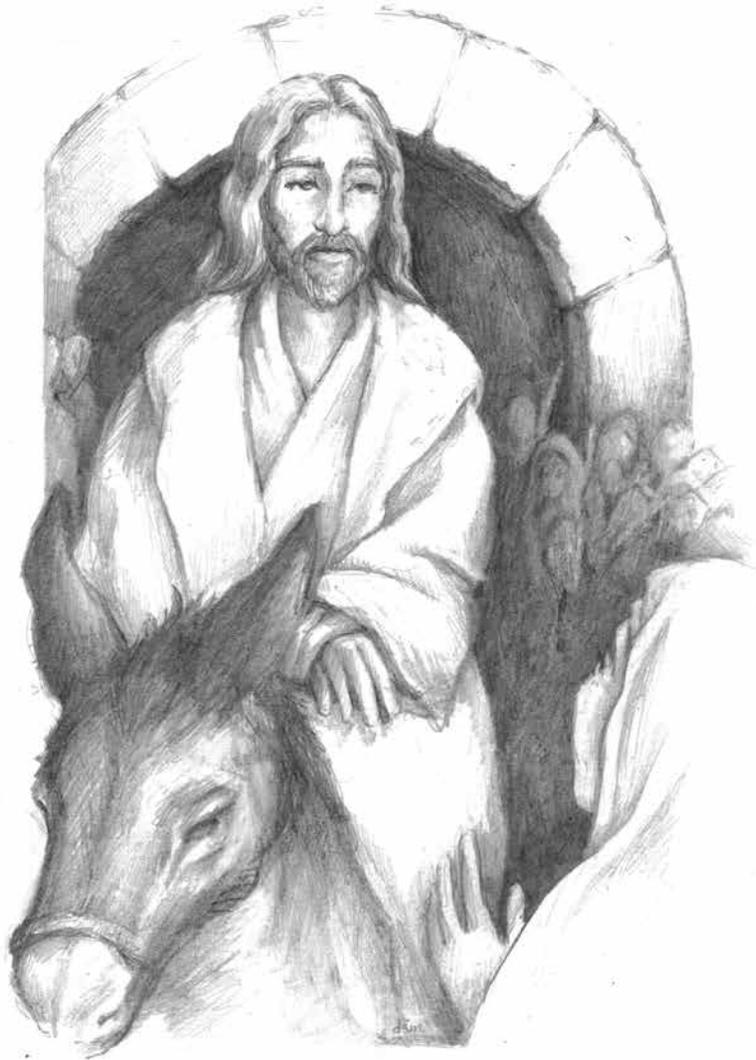
To be a living stone is to allow God to shape me and place me where I can support His work. He gave me a husband and He chose me to be a mother to two children. He chose to gift me with a voice that could be used to sing His praises. He has shaped me with the hardships and the joys He placed in my life. To be a living stone is to allow God to build faith in myself and to share that with anyone and everyone He chooses to place in my life.

Prayer:

God, let me be aware that You are always working through me,
even when I don't know it. Amen.

CATHY LYCHOLAJ

Mother. Gardener. Cantor.



HOLY WEEK

APRIL 14: PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

*"The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame." (Is 50:7)*

LUKE 19:28-40 | ISAIAH 50:4-7 | PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11 | LUKE 22:14-23:56



The Lord has given me the skills, knowledge, and patience necessary to heal and help my fellow brother and sisters. Morning after morning, I am blessed with the privilege of providing physical, emotional, and behavioral care to my patients. Increasingly, I have also recognized the importance of developing spirituality to maintain wellness. To stay well and overcome illness, we must not only nurture mind and body, but also soul. In an increasingly secular society, introducing this concept will often result in an angry rebuttal. To heal we must control fear and anger recognizing the Lord God is our help. Spirituality is as important a component in healing as science.

Albert Einstein said, "Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind." In the shadow of great scientists like Einstein, I continue to educate and convince my patients of the power of prayer, knowing that God is with me, in spite of the animosity it may sometimes ignite. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "I have set my face like flint knowing that I shall not be put to shame."

Prayer:

Lord God, we stand before you knowing that we are called to sainthood. We ask that you give us the vision to see that we are eternal spiritual beings on a physical journey. Protect us from the evil of all types of addiction and the resultant loss of spirituality during our earthly journey.

WILLIAM DEMPSEY

Father. Family Physician. Mentor.

APRIL 15: MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

*I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a light for the nations. (Is 42:6)*

ISAIAH 42:1-7 | JOHN 12:1-11



Years ago, I decided to take the bold step and accept an invitation to take a mission trip to Africa. I traveled by myself for more than thirty hours. My mission trainer told me that dark forces will begin to attack me and that I will question myself—*why did I do this?* The landscape before me was dry and dusty, and I could not help but think that this must have been what Jesus felt as he began his 40 day journey in the desert. There were so many problems before me and I began to feel overwhelmed, thinking I could fix everything that I was tasked to do. A Rwandan priest told me, “You are but one stone among many. Do not worry and trust God.” After much prayer and trust, one year later, I accomplished my mission. As we begin Holy Week, may we remember that while we cannot “fix” all of our problems, we can trust in God—as Jesus did—and submit ourselves wholly to his will. *Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)*

Prayer:

Dear Lord, remind me daily to put all my trust in you. Amen.



ROBIN FRAZIER

Mother. Grandmother. Retiree.

APRIL 16: TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

*Reclining at table with his disciples, Jesus was deeply troubled and testified,
“Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”
The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant. (Jn 13:21-22)*

ISAIAH 49:1-6 | JOHN 13:21-33, 36-38



Today’s readings tell us about trust and betrayal. The gospel tells a story of betrayal. Jesus was so troubled that one of His very own would betray Him even after just washing each other’s feet and as He was about to fulfill the ultimate act of service. One of His very own was about to turn away from Him.

For a moment you may ask as I did ... how could that be?

Then I thought more personally:

Are there times when I also feel betrayed? Of course!

Are there times when I have betrayed others? Absolutely!

Have I left our “Banquet Table” of Eucharist and turned away from the gospel message by how I speak to or treat others? Positively!

Just like Judas we do not have to be perfect to be a follower of Jesus. With all of my imperfections I am still called to be a follower inching my way to the “Eternal Banquet Table” and to be Jesus and see Jesus in all circumstances.

Prayer:

Come now, O God, and grant compassion. Open our hearts to love.

May we let go of all our hurt. Help us to move on. Come now, our God of second chances, may we forgive ourselves. May we become your living sign, children of God’s love. Amen.

[from “God of Second Chances” by David Haas]



ANN MARIE CAWLEY

Communion Minister. Lector. Nurse.

APRIL 17: WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

*The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced. (Is 50:7)*

ISAIAH 50:4-9A | MATTHEW 26:14-25



Today's Isaiah reading touches a lot on how God provides solace to those who find themselves suffering. As a teenager, I often find myself caught up in the trials and tribulations of this tough developmental time. Not only am I found making some of the biggest decisions for my future (college and career choices), but also I am found caught up in the whirlwind of drama that engulfs my age group. This combination can cause a perfect storm of suffering. Depleted self-confidence and lack of positive mental health plague a myriad of people, and I'd be lying if I said I haven't struggled myself. However, this suffering does not need to persist. God is the ultimate therapist—always listening to our struggles, and most importantly, always providing hope for the future. Struggling is a normal part of the human experience, but that doesn't mean that it's easy. God never fails to be there for me in the darkest of times.

Prayer:

Thank you God for never failing to be a shoulder to cry on,
and for being the light in the darkest of times. Amen.

CAMERON PETTINATO

Student. Musician. Son.

APRIL 18: HOLY THURSDAY

*I have given you a model to follow,
so that as I have done for you,
you should also do. (Jn 13:15)*

EXODUS 12:1-8, 11-14 | 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26 | JOHN 13:1-15



On this Holy Thursday night, Jesus makes present once again his command to love one another by washing each other's feet. For me, washing someone's feet is rooted in everyday charitable acts of love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, generosity, and bearing the faults of others. In short, these acts are considered an imitation of Christ. Christ wants us to imitate him in every way humanly possible, as this is the way to holiness. Whenever we imitate Christ, we are participating in the divine life of God.

Jesus inextricably links his command to wash each other's feet with the institution of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we once again participate in the divine life of God. Jesus breaks and shares himself with us in this great act of love and charity. When we wash each other's feet, in imitation of Christ, we break and share ourselves with each other.

Prayer:

Jesus, help me imitate you.

GEORGE FULMER

Husband. Music Minister. Director of Maintenance.

APRIL 19: GOOD FRIDAY

*For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who has similarly been tested in every way,
yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)*

ISAIAH 52:13–53:12 | HEBREWS 4:14-16;, 5:7-9 | JOHN 18:1–19:42



It is easy to feel a separation between the person that Jesus was and the person that I am. However, Paul's letter to the Hebrews reminds me that I need not feel so removed from him because Jesus knows how it feels to be me. He is not an unreachable phenomenon to whom I have to submit; he was flesh and blood, just like me. He was frustrated, reluctant, or absolutely devastated, just as I have been. My mom's favorite line in scripture is "Jesus wept" because she finds immense comfort in knowing that he felt the utter sadness that we can sometimes feel on earth. I like it too. It helps me understand that Jesus can be a friend in whom I can confide. Not only does Jesus understand what life on earth is like, he is also interested, pleased, and enthused by what's going on down here. My dorm room in New York has large windows overlooking the city, so my mornings are set by a luminous, blue—well, usually gray—skies. On the mornings when the sight is just breathtaking, I wake up at an unusual time before my alarm sounds, but I am met with the glory of the morning. I like to think that Jesus nudges me awake because he knows I wouldn't want to miss it. Basically, he is more present than it seems. He wants to be involved. He cares about every aspect of our lives. He can be there for us when it feels like no one else is. He knows how we feel because he knows where we've been.

Prayer:

Help me to find comfort in you when I don't know where to turn. Help me to face every situation, no matter the magnitude. Help me to learn from the heartbreak and to overcome the unforeseen. Help me to grow in the understanding that it will be okay. Be by my side through it all. Amen.

GRACE FARRELL

Sister. Daughter. Student.

APRIL 20: HOLY SATURDAY



The silence on that first Holy Saturday must have been deafening. Nothing to say. Nothing to do. Just sit and wonder, "now what? The disciples had no clear path, just sadness, confusion and silence. They had watched their teacher, their friend, and their future die a painful and humiliating death. "Now what?"

In our own lives, we have all had those moments when there is nothing to do, nothing to say, just the aching question, now what? The moments of sorrow at the loss of a loved one, when we know the world will never be the same again. The moments of fear, as we learn of a diagnosis, or the inkling of an addiction or mental illness becomes a reality and the path forward is completely foreign. The moments of uncertainty, when a job is lost or a relationship ends and we feel deflated and lost. The simple, yet frightening human question that lingered in the air that first Holy Saturday washes over us. Now what?

The answer to that question for us may be no clearer than for those early followers of Jesus. The only thing they knew was to get up Sunday morning and move forward, lean into their pain and confusion, and prepare the body of their friend and teacher. In our own moments of Holy Saturday we are called to do much the same, to move forward, to lean in to our own pain and confusion but with a promise, the promise that we will not be alone. When we lean in, when we move forward, when we ask the question, Jesus is there. Sometimes He will be there in the miraculous splendor of the resurrection and sometimes He will be there in the quiet reassurance of our restless hearts.

No matter when or where our Holy Saturday moments happen, as we struggle with "now what", Jesus' promise remains: "Whatever comes next, I love you and I will be with you always."

Prayer:

On this Holy Saturday and through all my Holy Saturday moments
let me know your love and trust in your care Lord. Amen.

ELLEN MORGAN

Wife. Mother. Counselor.

APRIL 21: THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

*[They] saw and believed.
For they did not yet understand the Scripture
that he had to rise from the dead. (Jn 20:9)*

ACTS 10:34A, 37-43 | COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 | JOHN 20:1-9



Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb of Jesus in fear after what had occurred on Good Friday. Seeing the stone rolled away, her fear turns to anger and disbelief as she runs to tell Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved. Peter and the other disciple run to the tomb—perhaps shocked that Jesus was gone, perhaps angry that someone stole his body, but surely uncertain of the future. They find the tomb empty, save for the burial cloths of Jesus. But seeing the burial cloths gives new meaning to their racing emotions: they begin to believe, even if they do not fully understand. They begin to realize what Jesus had been telling them—you *must have faith*. They now see, they now believe, and they now have faith. We all experience emotional changes in our lives. Whether everyday or over a long period of time, hopefully they lead us to the same place as the disciples: to empty tombs that renew our faith in our Lord and his never-ending love for us—the love we find in the miracle of Easter.

Today's psalm proclaims—the *stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*. Every structure has a foundation built of stone. If stones are missing or weak, the entire structure might collapse and be lost forever. I believe that our parish community is built of living stones, sealed through the Holy Eucharist at Mass, through prayer, through ministries, and through our community spirit. Even if we fail to be strong living stones, there is hope in the Good News that even stones once rejected can become a cornerstone.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, may the spirit of Easter fill my life and clear the darkness.
May the faith I have found through the mystery of Easter guide me in my life
as your loving servant. Amen.

BILL DONOVAN

Minister. Visitor. Participant.

HOLY WEEK 2019



APRIL 14: *Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion*
5 PM—Saturday | 8 AM, 10 AM, 12 PM—Sunday

THE HOLY TRIDUUM

One Liturgy. Three Moments.

APRIL 18: *Holy Thursday*

8 AM—Morning Prayer (OLS)

7 PM—Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

10 PM—Night Prayer

APRIL 19: *Good Friday*

8 AM—Morning Prayer (OLS)

3 PM—Stations of the Cross

7 PM—Liturgy of the Lord's Passion and Death

APRIL 20: *Holy Saturday*

8 AM—Morning Prayer (OLS)

3 PM—Blessing of Easter Food Baskets

8 PM—The Great Easter Vigil

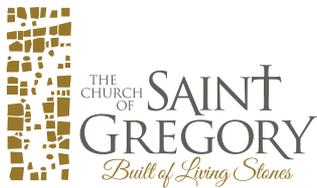
APRIL 21: *Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of the Lord*

8 AM, 10 AM, 12 PM

Thank You

Living Lent as Living Stones was written, compiled, edited,
illustrated and designed entirely by parishioners of the
Church of Saint Gregory. A sincere and heartfelt thank you
to all who participated in this project.





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