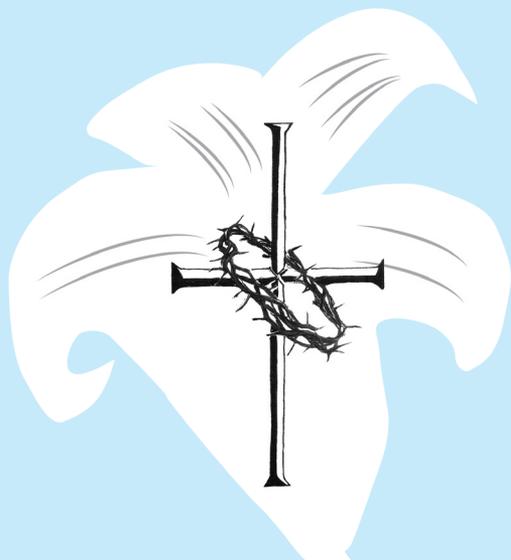


ALL SAINTS' PARISH
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF WORSHIP

Lenten Meditation



The
Order
of the
Daughters
of the King



All Saints' Episcopal Church
106 West Church Street
Frederick, MD 21701

Welcome

John Wesley, Anglican cleric and theologian, told us “Prayer is where the action is.” Christians across the globe are entering Lent, the season of preparation before Easter. Starting on Ash Wednesday, the 40-day period sees many Christians partake in a season of moderation, meditation, prayer, fasting, and repentance. The exercises in discipline are undertaken to allow Christians time to reflect on the life, words, and sacrifices of Jesus Christ.

The InSpired Daughters Chapter of the Daughters of the King have gathered thoughts and meditations from many within our parish to help supplement your annual Lenten journey, a journey we hope includes intentional and habitual prayer. This time allows one a bit of a “second chance,” to take a long, loving look at our lives and “return to God with our whole heart.”

Whichever Lenten practices you choose, may God richly bless and guide you during this contemplative time.

Sarah Bro
President, InSpired Daughters Chapter

NEW FEATURE

It is our hope that we will share our reactions throughout the Lenten Meditation through visual images! Throughout this booklet, you will find hashtags (phrases or words that begin with #) that relate to the meditations. As you feel called, find an image that relates to that specific meditation and tag it on Facebook with the appropriate hashtag AND *@allsaintsfredmd*. Please know that your image will not appear to the All Saints’ Facebook immediately, as our site’s administrator monitor the posts. It is our sincere we can become a closer knit community of prayer as we weave our images together throughout the season of Lent.

Cover illustration by Millie Cody

Ash Wednesday LAST WEEK OF EPIPHANY

COLLECT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 217

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

READ: JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B-6:10

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

PSALM 103 OR 103:8-14

“Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made.” The collect for Ash Wednesday begins with this statement about God. God does not hate anything that God has created. Seems pretty negative to me. I suppose if I wanted to make this a positive statement, I might say that God loves everything that God has made. All of creation is loved by God certainly feels better... but that is not how the collect begins. This our season of Lent begins with a double negative.

I think this prayer is giving breath to the reality that sometimes I don't feel the overwhelming love of God. Sometimes I might even feel hated, despised, and exiled. Maybe someone has hurt me with words or actions. Maybe I am suffering from my own depressed perspective and I cannot even imagine how God might love me in the midst of my brokenness. Maybe my life has taken such a negative turn that pain, grief, and suffering have suffocated the life-giving Spirit of God, and I forget that I am beloved.

In a strange and paradoxical way, Ash Wednesday reminds me that I am loved by inviting me to confront the frightening and isolating reality of my own mortality... with the promise of God's grace and blessing, of course. I have noticed over the years of marking a dry gritty crosses on the foreheads of infants and ancient ones that some people come to receive ashes who never darken the door of the church

the rest of the year. It is curious; what brings them to church for ashes and not for “Alleluias” and “Come Let Us Adore Him?” I think, this ritual is more real to them than the miraculous celebrations of Christmas and Easter. This ritual always meets me right where I am in life: Walking the pilgrim path from birth to death, and struggling at times to remember that I am beloved. The ashes on my forehead help me turn towards suffering and death and take Christ’s hand in mine so that we might walk to the cross together. The ashes on my forehead remind me that even God embraced death and laid down in the tomb for three days.

God hates nothing God has made and everything that God has made will die and return to dust. When I stop running from death, when I plant my feet and turn towards the dust I will become, then I receive a tremendous gift! God’s presence with me throughout my entire life, and especially through my death. I am assured that God does not abandon me anywhere along the way. When I run from death, I let fear overrule my faith. When I run from death, I reject the promise of resurrection. When I run from death, I run from God.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. — Joel 2:12-13

#Ashes

offer your own images and reflections @allsaintsfredmd on Facebook

~ Mother Adrien Dawson | Rector, All Saints’ Parish

Thursday AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

READ: DEUTERONOMY 30: 15-20 *
LUKE 9:18:25 *
PSALM 1 *

Each of today's passages calls us to commit, to make a choice.

In Deuteronomy, with the Promised Land before him, Moses presents his people with "life and prosperity" or "death and destruction."

In Luke, Jesus offers us discipleship and salvation, an opportunity to escape the abyss of self-centeredness.

The Psalmist also describes a dichotomy: the righteous and the wicked. The righteous are likened to an ever-fruitful tree, the wicked to windblown chaff. "The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."

In my mind's eye, I see an ancient harvest. Life-sustaining grain is being tossed into the air, falling and being caught in a shallow woven basket; the chaff is carried away in the breeze.

But the grain does not exist without the chaff. The chaff is not only the supporting stalk of the plant; it is also the protective outer covering of the cherished grain. They are interdependent, part of the same plant. Sprung as one from the same seed, they grew together under the same sun.

Ancient farmers often left a portion of their harvests remaining in the field, an offering to be gleaned by the less fortunate. In those farmers, and in those gleaners, I see Jesus. I especially see Him in the gleaners, lifting up the forgotten and cast-off. Jesus lifts up the chaff and the grain together, the wicked *and* the righteous.

Perhaps I am more chaff than tree. Despite the decrees of the Psalmist, I look to stand in judgment and in the assembly of the righteous. We all should.

#Commit

offer your own images and reflections @allsaintsfredmd on Facebook

~ JONATHAN GAMBILL | VESTRY, ACOLYTE WRANGLER, CHALICIST

Friday AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

READ: PSALM 51:1-10
ISAIAH 58:1-9A *
MATTHEW 9:10-17

I struggle with the Old Testament and generally end up returning to the New Testament.

After spending the better half of a month studying Isaiah 58 and reflecting on various Lenten practices I enjoyed, endured and in some cases completed over the last 35 years, this passage has helped me to pray more and ask questions of myself on what is a true Fast.

We are told to fast in private. Not to put on a sad face in the New Testament. The first time I fasted I gave up sweets. I seemed obsessed with every sweet I saw and I'm generally not a big sugar person. I made it and truly wasn't that anxious for the cheesecake at the end of 40 days as I thought I would have been. Then I found that if I gave up sweets and intentionally replaced it with eating more fruit, I could spend more time in prayer than obsessing about what I was missing. There in developed my response to the fasting tradition as taking *on*, rather than giving *up*. Isaiah's passage brings me to the next dimension of fasting, by refraining from behavior that benefits myself rather than others. Such as not insisting that all rooms in my house are picked up and causing stress to all of my family. Criticizing coworkers rather than treating them with more compassion and praise. Not worrying about how I can support the local food bank for a week but stepping out and doing it. And, for me the list can go on and on—behavior that I have taken as normal has new eyes and this is exciting.

Perhaps I will be spending more time in the Old Testament after all!

Dear Lord, open our eyes during this Lenten season that we may see the good works you would have us to do to develop a deeper relationship with you and the Kingdom here on earth. Amen.

#Fasting

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~ SHARON O'REAR

Saturday AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

READ: PSALM 87:1-11
ISAIAH 58:9B-14
LUKE 5:27-32 *
PSALM 86:1-11 *

Jesus is about to be David, King of Israel; the warrior, the poet, the musician, the giant slayer, the bane of Saul's reign; we see the many faces of David throughout the Old Testament over a lifetime of leadership, toil and conquest. But David, the Lord's servant; is conjured up through the poetic writings he scribed in the Psalms, of his relationship with the Lord in times of need. It is thought that David carried this appeal, or a version thereof; into battle frequently; emboldened through the succor of the All Mighty. His devotion to the Lord is well documented and his pleadings for help through accolade-laden supplication portray a loyal servant; inexorably tied to God the Father.

We are all sinners in God's eyes and many who find themselves in times of trouble reach to the Lord for protection and/or solace; reflexively, if we consider ourselves devout in our faith. But what comes of those unlike David, who have never known of this God; those poor, weak and of unhealthy mind or those sinners who cry out for His shelter only in deep moments of despair; sans prior faith?

David's faith through prayer conjures visions of a well-pleased Father; but is belief our only spiritual consideration? This seems to raise questions, such as:

- Does God protect us only if we prove devotion?
- Is God only pleased if we show our faith in certain ways; by following his Sons teachings; through mindful prayer, by helping others or through attending church?
- Did Jesus only cater to those exhibiting 'spiritual potential'?
- What else is required for inclusion in God's Kingdom?

Consider Luke's version (5: 27-32) of Jesus' encounter with Levi; a tax collector, who in those days was considered little more than a thief. Jesus said to Levi, 'Follow Me', and upon invitation; Jesus attended a banquet hosted by Levi along with 100 fellow associates; upsetting the Pharisees and scribes for the company he'd chosen. "Why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners?" they asked. Jesus explained, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance." This gesture to one outside of the worship community, to leave his life and livelihood behind, was a prime example of those whom God would want to welcome into his fold.

For this Lenten time, the Prophet Isaiah (58: 9b-14) notes how Jerusalem struggled to rebuild following the destruction of the city and Temple. Leadership was divided, many were homeless and hungry, quarreling hindered progress, even as faith seemed abundant. But Isaiah scolds the Judeans for their self-interest, born out of a misguided devotion and worship to their God. It seems the Judeans suffered a form of societal disconnect. They had grown to incorporate a spiritual following, but they fell short in serving and providing for the needs of their fellow 'man'.

Throughout Biblical scripture, we see God urging devotion to his form of 'agape' love; universal, unconditional and all-encompassing. We witness; laid out through passages in Proverbs, Isaiah, Deuteronomy and elsewhere, what constitutes an abomination to the Lord. Yet later; we are taught through Jesus' lessons, interactions and parables that we can right our standing with the Lord; through repentance and reconciliation, in hopes of restoration (salvation). But what is required of us; if our aspirations include the three R's?

Are faith and trust in the Lord such as David's, an effective facilitator in righting ourselves with God, in hopes of protection, and salvation from sin? Surely it would seem so. However; our relationship with the Holy Spirit encompasses much more than devotion. Our spiritual footing relies even more fundamentally on our relationship with our fellow 'man'; and how we go about facilitating a world in which we can all live in concert. Faith, without action; seems incomplete at best.

#Sinners

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~ BILL GIBB | USHER, OVER THE HILL GANG, RECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE, GARDEN COMMITTEE, AUDIT COMMITTEE, PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Sunday FIRST WEEK OF LENT

READ: GENESIS 2:15-17, 3:1-7
ROMANS 5:12-19
MATTHEW 4:1-11 *
PSALM 32

One of many definitions of temptation is: *The desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise.* My observation is this word is negative and malicious.

Well throughout my years, I have been tempted countless times. My first memory of being tempted was when I was about eight or nine years old. I opened up my church offering envelope, removed the contents (money that my parents placed in the envelope), and stopped by the local candy store to buy some candy on my way to church. Now, was I tempted by my siblings encouraging me to do this act, or was the temptation situational because the candy store was open when I was walking to church? Or did the temptation come from that tap on my shoulder and a voice saying “come on you know you want the candy, you deserve the candy, and its only one week and the church gets the money every week, heck no one will find out?” Well, whatever the catalyst, my actions were wrong and unwise.

Obviously, this act had an impact on my life because over fifty years later I am writing about it. I can also safely share that there were countless other times since that first memory when I became vulnerable to temptation. Some I remember and some are in the deep recesses of my mind.

I believe that temptation is an invitation to sin and as I have aged, matured, and spiritually grown, I have developed ways to resist many temptations; but not all. If I am tempted by a thing (the candy store) I try to avoid it, if I am tempted by an individual(s) (my siblings), I weigh options and try not to be impetuous. If I am tempted by that tap on my shoulder with a negative voice I try to reasonably figure out the positive and negative consequences before acting. In all these situations I try to use common sense by not placing myself in a situation that would weaken me.

As I spiritually grow, I have learned that prayer is an excellent device to resist temptation. I believe that a prayer could be a simple and inconspicuous “God be with me.” I know with God by my side I have tremendously built my guard against temptation.

So why are we tempted in our daily lives? It would be easy if we had no temptation and life would be easy. Maybe temptation is not a negative and malicious word but a reminder that with God we can free ourselves from the temptations that we struggle with in our daily lives.

Christ showed his ultimate love for us by dying on the cross. I can use this love by continually trying to resist temptation.

#Temptation

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~ DAN LAJEWSKI | ST. MARY'S CHAPTER, OVER THE HILL GANG, OUTREACH COMMITTEE,
GOURMET NIGHT, SUMMER AND SPECIAL CHALLENGE WEEK CAMPS

Monday FIRST WEEK OF LENT

READ: LEVITICUS 19:1-2, 11-18
MATTHEW 25:31-46 *
PSALM 19:7-14

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the endless level of need in the world? Every day, we are inundated with pleas for help. We are asked to give our money, our time, or our possessions. Even though we are reading these meditations in the season of Lent, they are being written between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. This year, the Salvation Army bell ringers were out soliciting donations before Thanksgiving Day. Every day the mailbox seems to be filled with letters from organizations needing money or other items. The cries for help seem to start earlier and sound louder every year.

In Matthew 25, verses 31-46, Jesus is very clear what he expects from us when we are faced with someone in need. Feed the hungry, befriend the lonely, clothe the naked, tend to the sick or imprisoned. Simple, right? Well, maybe not always. For one reason or another, we may not always be in a position to do what Jesus commands us to do. Then what? What do we do when we feel helpless to help the helpless?

What I have learned is that we can strive to love others as Jesus loves us, to see Jesus in the face of others. And we can always pray. We can pray for those who need assistance. We can pray that the help they need comes to them, even if it cannot come from us. We can pray that God will guide us to do what we are able to do when we can't quite figure it out for ourselves.

The final two verses in this passage are sobering ones: "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." We can choose to

look away when confronted with need, and God will notice. Or, we can choose to extend love, compassion and mercy to those in need, and God will notice.

Lord Jesus, help me to see your face in others. Guide me to do what is right and pleasing to you. Amen.

#Do what is right

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~ CATHY GUZAUSKAS | FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE, RECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Tuesday FIRST WEEK OF LENT

READ: ISAIAH 55:6-11

MATTHEW 6:7-15 *

PSALM 34:15-22

Everything is interconnected. Water vapor picked up by the atmosphere thousands of miles away over the Pacific Ocean can condense into liquid and form a raindrop that falls on my head here in Frederick. A ray of light from a star can travel thousands of light years through space into my eye and form an image in my mind. These interconnecting webs of phenomena are the world we live in—impermanent and always breaking and reconnecting—and constantly transforming from one state into another.

And, just as plants use water and sunlight from the sky to grow—transforming elements and energy into something new and greater than the sum of its parts—living things give back to the universe something that is not empty—something fulfilling (and often loving). We contain many seeds that when watered and nurtured sprout, and can bear fruit to feed each of us and the larger community.

To me this is a model for spiritual growth. The words of God can be transformed; making each of us and the communities we live in something more loving and nourishing than we may feel capable of doing on our own—something beyond our limitations.

#Transformation

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~ TOMMY TURBYVILLE | YOUTH FORMATION TEACHER, VESTRY

Wednesday FIRST WEEK OF LENT

READ: PSALM 51:11-18 *
JONAH 3:1-10
LUKE 11:29-32

As we are just into the first week of Lent, I see this time as an opportunity to practice what this psalm is telling us. God wants us to come to Him with our broken spirit. He knows of all of our sins, and all we must do is ask! Ask for His help in regaining a strong spirit so that we can help others to see His truth and light amongst all evil and sin.

God is ever-present and ever-forgiving of even our most evil and darkest thoughts and actions. Know that God is a forgiving God who will restore us. All we need to do is ask Him!

I know that when I stray from God's call (which is more often than I would like to admit), just calling His name out—sometimes out loud and even if I'm not sure what I'm calling Him about—gives me a sense of calm, hope, and renewed spirit that almost instantly sets me in the right place—with Him.

During this Lenten season, take time to pray; ask for forgiveness and strength to be brave, and listen to what God is calling you to do. Ask our Lord and Saviour to help you be His voice, His teacher, and His vision in everything you do.

Praise be to God!

#Broken Spirit

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~ JILL BROWNING | PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY, GREAT HALL CHOIR, LECTOR,
DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, RECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Thursday FIRST WEEK OF LENT

READ: ESTHER 14: 1-6, 12-14

MATTHEW 7: 7-12 *

PSALM 138

Having worked with children and families my whole life what comes to mind here in Matthew's Gospel of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, is simplicity. The best understanding for us as children of God, are simple messages that guide us into a closer relationship with each other and God. "Ask and it will be given." Children persistently ask their parents questions. They learn about life by doing this. Sometimes children ask for something they want and it is not given. Answers can be immediate or obvious or they can come later or be subtle. But children and adults learn to understand what life is about by asking. The answer always comes.

"The one who seeks, finds." When children and adults are looking for something the process can be frustrating. But parents and God can help. Be patient. "Knock, and the door will be opened." An open door is a loving response when many doors close in our lives. Most parents, who are imperfect, try to love their children unconditionally. Can you imagine the love that will be revealed from God if we ask, seek, and knock? The Golden Rule you learned as a child, "do to others what you would have them do unto you." Pure and simple.

#Simplicity

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~ LOUISA POTTS | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, WORSHIP TEAM

READ: EZEKIEL 18:21-28 *

MATTHEW 5:20-26 *

PSALM 130 *

But if the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is lawful and right, they shall surely live; they shall not die. None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them. – Ezekiel 18

...first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. – Matthew 5

For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. – Psalm 130

A common theme among the three readings for today is sin and redemption. As I was reading the passages, I thought of a recent visit to Baltimore. Randy and I had some time on our hands while we waited for our daughter Kate to finish a diocesan youth meeting. And since we are both interested in history and church buildings, the Catholic Basilica was a good selection. We entered the hushed sanctuary and walked around, looking at the statues and reading the plaques informing us about the Basilica's history. I was struck by the confessionals and was reminded of one of the biggest differences between the Episcopal Church and the Catholic Church—how we approach sin, repentance and forgiveness.

In our church, we repent of our sins collectively and usually privately, with our sins known only to us and to God. We have a process for more formal reconciliation and confession of specific sins, though I suspect it is used less frequently than the Catholic practice of confession and the act of confessing our sins does not have the same visual reminder as it does in a Catholic church. While my knowledge of Catholic confession is informed more by movies and TV shows than any actual experience, I've come to memorize, like many of us, the *Confession of Sin* portion of the service that we say nearly every week. It's an opportunity for reflection on the previous week and for rededication for the coming week.

In my three decades of attending Episcopal services, one of the most powerful parts for me has always been the absolution of sin. Whenever we say and hear the familiar words, we have the opportunity to get a clean slate. Lent is a time when sin and reconciliation are emphasized more than at any other time of the year and rather than being in the middle of the service, the confession is front and center.

Some may consider Lent to be rather depressing and a time when people might avoid coming to church—why focus on what I'm doing wrong or failing to do right

when that's only going to make me feel bad? I want to come to church to feel better, not worse, some may think.

What you learn, though, is that the process of confession and absolution has restorative power because of God's love for us as shown through the birth, life and death of his son Jesus. God redeems our sins, and God's healing grace is available to all who sincerely seek it. Like rain clears the dust from the sidewalks and a thunderstorm ushers in clear skies, confession of sin makes way for God's love to take hold in us and gives us the chance to share that love and that light with everyone we encounter during the week. I hope this Lent is an opportunity for renewal and rededication for our All Saints' family and for all Christians.

#Redemption

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~ RACHEL QUERRY | CHAIRPERSON, STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Saturday FIRST WEEK OF LENT

READ: DEUTERONOMY 5:43-48

MATTHEW 5:43-48 *

PSALM 119:1-8

I often accompanied my mother on visits to my father in the nursing home where he spent the last few months of his life. He had a lovely room at the end of a long hall and as we walked along, my mother stopped and spoke to everyone she encountered. There was one patient who always seemed to be parked in her wheelchair in the hall and as my mother greeted her, she would respond with a litany of obscenities to which my mother would usually smile and say something like, "Are you wearing a new sweater today? It sure is pretty!" My mother never failed to treat others with dignity and respect.

I doubt that loving those who reject or persecute us comes easily for most of us. We naturally oppose and hate our enemies, or at least, we treat them with a cold shoulder and keep our distance. Yet in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. How can we possibly do that?

When the Holy Spirit is working in us, then this is not just some nice philosophical, ethical or moral idea that is impossible to fulfill. Jesus is talking about agape love—a deep concern for the good of others that reaches out even if there is no return. What Jesus is asking us to do is not something impossible or unnatural. It is the

only thing that makes sense and will bring peace to me and hopefully in time to the person who is hostile to me. We can literally disarm a hating person by acting towards them in a positive and loving way and refusing to be controlled by their negative attitudes. “Blessed are the peacemakers; they will be called children of God.”

It is easy to love those who love us and greet those who greet us, but what sets Christians apart is God’s call to a radical transformation in our hearts. We are called to a higher standard of behavior. Just as God allows the rain and the sun to fall on people who are good and those who persecute us, we should do the same with our love.

The Greek word for “perfect” in Matthew 5:48, “telios”, means whole, complete, mature. Perfection is an ideal to which we should aspire. Regardless of our age or maturity, God expects nothing less than our very best. It is a call to do our utmost to imitate Him by extending our goodwill unconditionally to every single person. As we reach for perfection, we benefit ourselves by becoming more like our heavenly Father.

Heavenly Father, transform our human nature and allow us to trust your Holy Spirit to help us show love for those for whom we may not feel love. Amen.

#Do our very best

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~ MARY ANN WESSELMAN | ALTAR GUILD, FLOWER GUILD, MEMORIAL GARDEN
COMMITTEE, BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE,
OUTREACH COMMITTEE, ST. MARY’S CHAPTER

READ: GENESIS 12:1-4A
ROMANS 4:1-5, 13-17
JOHN 3:1-17 *
PSALM 121

I appreciate Nicodemus' question because it opens the door for all of us to question and wonder. Here was a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish sect that was known for their strict observance of traditional and written law, and he was approaching the very person who was challenging all that he had come to know and believe. Instead of trying to back Jesus into a corner, he approaches him at night and begins to seek answers to his questions.

It may seem to the 21st century reader that Nicodemus is being a bit dense, but haven't you questioned God's presence in your life? Haven't you had moments when you've had difficulty believing in and getting your hands around this thing called faith? I think if we are honest with ourselves we all have been in places of question and doubt. When we have been unable to see beyond the obvious and understand the mystery of God in our life to be much greater than what we can ever comprehend.

While Jesus may have been a bit frustrated with Nicodemus' literal interpretation of being born from above, he doesn't dismiss him; instead he uses it as a teaching moment. An opportunity to help his new student open his eyes and ears—and most importantly his heart to fully take in and ponder what Jesus was telling him. The Holy Spirit isn't something we can see or hold in our hands. But the Holy Spirit is in and around all of us, nudging us to turn towards God—to keep our sights on heavenly things, not earthly things. It is the Holy Spirit that prods us—knowingly or unknowingly—to take the first step towards God, by trusting in Jesus, just as Nicodemus did.

During this season of Lent take the time to ask the question, "How can these things be?" Spend time with scripture and in prayer. Talk with others about their faith and how they have or have not grown closer to Christ. Ponder, wonder, and hold close to your heart all these things. My prayer for all of us is that during this season of Lent we will deepen our faith, our understanding of, and love for God by following the example of Christ and that through the Holy Spirit we will be the light that touches others who may be asking the same question — "How can these things be?"

#Faith offer your own images and reflections @allsaintsfredmd on Facebook

Monday SECOND WEEK OF LENT

READ: PSALM 79: 1-9 *

DANIEL 9: 3-10 *

LUKE 6:27-38 *

The message of our assigned Gospel for today is really very hard and tough for me to live into it. I have always considered myself a strong faith Christian, but I am having great difficulty at this time doing what Jesus is commanding us to do in this passage. Reading these passages now is the second time since our national elections that I have felt so very weak, sad and inadequate as a Christian. The first was during the Prayers of the People, a few Sundays ago. That is when I had an extremely hard time praying for the blessings for president-elect, Donald Trump. I was reduced to tears, from being scared and frightened. As in the scripture from Daniel, "Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. (The ashes from Ash Wednesday.) I am still not sure which is more difficult to endure, the fear and anxiety of our nation's future, or the pain from a trusted business partner's embezzlement. It is not easy to pray for one who wrecked me financially, and destroyed my retirement structure. Nor is it easy to pray for someone who has the authority and the power and the intent to destroy the progress and the advancements accomplished over the past fifty years of struggle and efforts for social justice, civil rights, voting rights, human dignity, racial equality, and living together as equal sisters and brothers in Christ.

Now at age 77, I have spent 65 years in the struggle of Black Americans in our country. At age 15, I began working with my father in his voter registration drives in South Carolina as president of the local NAACP Chapter. My father never became bitter nor discouraged in spite of the harsh racial treatment by the local law officials, the political leaders, and the KKK. Thinking back, he was the living example of Jesus' words in Luke. I realize now that I did not inherit that part of his character and truly strong faith.

The Psalmist words ring very true today in my thinking, with great dismay. "O God, the nations have come into your inheritance, they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins." I do not have the hope and the optimism for our nation at this time. We may become "slaves" again, because the "Romans" are back in charge as the "Rulers."

I am not yet sure that I am able to accomplish and fully live into this command of Jesus. Nevertheless, I am praying for the strength of faith and for God's help to live out this command of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ... "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." Today, I invite each of you to join me, during this

Lenten Season, to meditate and to pray with me for social justice throughout our Church and our nation.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 823)

#Justice

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~ WAYMON WRIGHT | DIOCESAN COUNCIL, DIOCESAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION
COMMISSION WORKSHOP FACILITATOR, CO-CHAIR OF DIOCESAN
COUNCIL AD HOC COMMITTEE ON REPARATIONS, LAY
EUCCHARISTIC MINISTER, EUCCHARISTIC VISITOR, LECTOR,
HEALING MINISTER AND USHER

Tuesday SECOND WEEK OF LENT

READ: ISAIAH 1:2-4, 16-20
MATTHEW 23:1-12 *
PSALM 50:7-15, 22-24

I am saddened that worldly wisdom erroneously views “all who humble themselves will be exalted” as a credo for fools. But it’s really the other way around; our true confidence is in the Lord, not ourselves. I often need to remind myself that there is no firmer grounding than Christ upon which to base our confidence—certainly not on ourselves alone, and certainly not in those who lack humility. Considering that perspective provides relief from the false expectation that I should puff myself up. Jesus teaches us that we do not lose our humanity, or our dignity, or our freedom through humility; but instead we gain not only all of those things but also affirmation and purpose from the Lord himself.

We are in a culture that increasingly celebrates hubris. It does so even as it criticizes it and chronicles the broken government, community, business, sports, and personal relationships it wrecks. The temptation might be to match hubris with counter-hubris but, although being strong is essential, fighting fire with fire only burns everything down including our own house. Jesus showed us a better, and actually a

more effective, way to resist injustice at all levels on all fronts. We really can speak the truth (after we have learned it) boldly, in love, and also with humility—to fully live our faith, we must do so.

Through humility, we become truly exalted in a constructive and holy way. When God exalts us in our humility, we become blessings to our fellow humans and a pleasure to our Creator. I see great purpose and meaning in life in such humility, and I would call it “Level 6” on Maslow’s Hierarchy: “Holiness Actualization.” It is clear from the scriptures that Jesus’ humility in no way detracted from his Lordship, but instead enhanced his communion with the Father. And he calls us to join him in this humility as we travel deeper into his kingdom.

Being a Christ-like servant neutralizes the oppressive dehumanization that the world tries to impose on the act of service. Living our humility the way Jesus our Lord lived it frees us to “seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” with a holy confidence free of hubris. And we may be confident that our Lord Jesus empowers us to do just that.

#Humility

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~ MARK WALKER | LAY EUCHARIST VISITOR (LEM), LECTOR, EUCHARISTIC VISITOR,
ADULT FORMATION

Wednesday SECOND WEEK OF LENT

READ: JEREMIAH 18:1-11, 18-20 *

MATTHEW 20:17-28

PSALM 31:9-16

I have always like the idea of being clay under the potter’s hand, with God forming and shaping me with gentle prodding and guiding, molding me into what I need to be in order to help God’s will be done. I have watched potters working with a wheel and the creation under their hands seems to magically form with their firm, gentle hands almost never breaking contact. I kind of want to skip over the bit about trying again when the vessel doesn’t turn out right, but I can’t because that is what the whole story is about. You know what happens when a potter tries again, right?

The potter completely smashes the burgeoning vessel, throws the wet clay on the wheel with a resounding thud, and begins again. While I really like the molding part, I run from the squashing part. The thing is, when potters make a vessel on a wheel,

they don't call it molding or gently guiding a pot. They call it "throwing a pot." The trauma of being smashed and thrown against a quickly spinning wheel is built into the very concept of creating a vessel. As much as we run away from or cry out against the pain and heartache of growing and changing and becoming who we are, we cannot be who we are without the traumas that we endure. To paraphrase something someone I love very dearly once told me, The good thing about hitting rock bottom is that you have somewhere to put your feet when you stand up and start to climb out of the pit.

One other thing about the process of "throwing a pot" is that a potter uses tools to complete the process of throwing a pot. The potter uses a wheel, which becomes the foundation to build us up: Whoever it is in our lives that we can use as a foundation to help us stand up again – family, a counselor, a priest, a friend. Water is required to help the clay remain supple and accept the changes the potter makes. This might be our heart's haven: a person, a place or an activity. Different tools are used to provide shape, texture, and details. A saint that I love, Theresa of Avila, once said:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which to look out,
Christ's compassion to the world
Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now*

While we are being shaped by God's hands as the vessel that is needed, we also need to be the tools God uses to help to shape the lives of others. We cannot just stand by while another of God's creatures is going through the trauma of "the shaping." We need to be for each other God's tools: The wheel – the foundation the safe place and rock from which to stand and begin anew; the water to help each other survive the shaping without becoming brittle and breaking; the tools to help each other become the shape and form of God's pleasure and need.

#Shaping

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~ HELEN PERCY | HISTORIC CHURCH CHOIR

Thursday SECOND WEEK OF LENT

READ: JEREMIAH 17:5-10

LUKE 16:19-31 *

PSALM 1

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. — Luke 16:19

Glimmering purple was the dress she wore. Her ebony colored expression radiant, humble, and joyful as she greeted us. The only thing in common between her and the rich man in Jeremiah, was the color they wore. Vanitie Pilorge is Haitian and it very well could be that her glorious purple dress was the only “church going” outfit she owned. Her town, Cavaillon, was six hours away from Port au Prince, in an area that was ravaged by October’s Hurricane Matthew. Her simple home had been destroyed by the storm’s strong winds. In the night she would take shelter in the wind damaged school classroom. Vanite does not feast sumptuously every day, but arises before dawn to cook meals over a open fire for the schoolchildren. Not outwardly rich, but oh, so rich in faith, this woman, a Daughter of the King, traveled for six hours in the back of an open pickup truck with three other Daughters, to attend a large gathering of Daughters of the King in Port au Prince. While life has given her many reasons to sink into despair, her faith in the Lord has given her hope and a joy that is contagious.

Dear Lord, thank you that you care for us and sustain us. Help us to remember the richness of joy and hope that can be found in you. We lift up to you those nearby and those far away who have heavy burdens to carry. Help us to be the light of Christ to your people. Amen.

#Light of Christ

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~ LINDA MILLER | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY,
ALTAR GUILD

READ: GENESIS 37:3-4, 12-28 *

MATTHEW 21:33-43

PSALM 105:16-22

Israel loved Joseph more than any of his brothers. The love and favor Israel showed Joseph led to that kind of blind jealousy and hate that pushes aside all reason. Of course, family position and inheritance in those days could have a life or death impact, so perhaps there's more to it than simple jealousy. And the intensity of their jealousy probably didn't happen overnight; surely, it grew with each example of Israel's favor toward Joseph. Then there was the "mob mentality" of the brothers grumbling together that likely perpetuated the anger and escalated this situation. But to be so completely consumed with jealousy and hate that you would conceive of killing or selling another person (let alone your own brother) is hard to fathom. Thankfully, Reuben stepped in (though he's certainly not blameless); not enough to make them see reason, but enough to divert their attention and save Joseph's life.

As I considered the emotions swirling around in this passage, I thought about the times that I'd gotten angry about something. And if I dwelt on the anger long enough, it festered and seemed more intense. And if I shared my concerns with a friend, the anger would grow with the retelling, often way out of proportion to the original cause. When I think of the pain that these emotions caused for Joseph and his father and, in the end, his brothers, it makes me think with regret of how my own anger may have caused similar distress to my friends or my family or my colleagues. Though it's sometimes hard to look past our own feelings, we need to remember our emotions don't just affect us.

This passage reminds me of how anger and jealousy can blind us—to our connections, to the feelings of others, even to the reason for the anger itself. It erodes our compassion and clouds our judgement. And in the grand scheme of things, the things I've gotten angry about are generally, when all is said and done, just not that important. Certainly not as important as the relationship with my family member or friend or colleague. Our emotions (positive and negative) are part of our human frailty, but this passage makes me realize that, positive or negative, they can cloud our reason. Lent seems like the perfect opportunity to reflect on how I can handle my emotions better and to ask God to help me see the important things more clearly.

#Swirling Emotions

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Saturday SECOND WEEK OF LENT

READ: MICAH 7:14-15, 18-20 *
LUKE 15:11-32
PSALM 103:1-4, (5-8), 9-12

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and gives transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

— **Micah 7:18**

Lent is a perfect time to reflect on life and ask God to pardon all of our sins—known and unknown. What a glorious reminder in the reading of Micah that God forgives us all! The Lord doesn't stay angry forever but is all about showing compassion, forgiveness and love. Take the time to pray and ask for forgiveness. If you want to listen to an incredible singing of this verse, look on *YouTube*: "Who Is a God like You?" Micah 7:18-20.

#Forgiveness

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~ WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY FOR DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Sunday THIRD WEEK OF LENT

READ: EXODUS 17:1-7 PSALM 95
ROMANS 5:1-11 ROMANS 5:3-5 *
JOHN 4: 5-42

Several years ago, my husband and I learned that the company we had worked for since we were teenagers was going to outsource our entire division. We were stunned; we had naively thought we were secure in our long-time jobs and would spend the rest of our work life in these positions. Never before had we worried about our incomes. Suddenly we had to assess our financial situation, learn to write a resume, and devise a plan in case one or both of us did not obtain jobs with the new company.

After more than a year of stress, praying and planning, we both were offered jobs with the new company. Those many months of uncertainty changed us both in a number of ways. In making ourselves marketable, we had developed new skills. We now knew exactly where we stood in our financial lives. We had a plan in place. We were now in a better position to deal with a job loss should it happen.

During those months of anxiety, I cannot say there was rejoicing. But there was

growth in strength and confidence. We were never promised that life would be fair, or easy, or a bed of roses. It is life's challenges that shape and build us; much as metal is forged in the extreme heat.

Heavenly Father: Thank you for the trials my life. Help me to stand the tests with my faith and prayers. Amen.

#Thankful

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~ SUE FOWLE | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Monday THIRD WEEK OF LENT

READ: 2 SAMUEL 7:4,8-16

ROMANS 4:13-18

LUKE 2:41-52

PSALM 89:1-12 OR 89:1-4, 26-29 *

These are stories about: loyalty and promise, heirs, kingdoms, faith and love.

They are stories about relatives: Abraham, David and Jesus of Nazareth.

They were each Faithful Servants—chosen by God for ongoing Love and Protection.

This strength of generations is a powerful history in our roots.

Their strength of Faith calls to hope for the future with limitless possibilities.

The past generations seem to support the hopeful future in the present now.

The enlightenment of our ancestors can be a powerful influence on our present capacity to envision amazing outcomes!

God is present in this Kingdom of Heaven; God is present in Love.

The Kingdom of Heaven is Everlasting Love.

We learn to embrace Love and we are woven together in God's Loving Embrace.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

#Faithful Servants

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~ LINDA PROCTOR | VESTRY, PASTORAL CARE COORDINATOR, DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Tuesday THIRD WEEK OF LENT

READ: PSALM 25:3-10

SONG OF THREE YOUNG MEN 2-4, 11-20

MATTHEW 18:21-35 *

Peter asked “Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

Jesus replied, “No, not seven times, but seventy times seven.”

He then tells a story about a king who forgives a huge debt that his servant owes him. Then the servant goes to someone who owes him a debt and throws him in prison when he cannot pay. The king then orders his servant to prison until he can repay the debt. Jesus says “This is how my Father in heaven will treat you unless you forgive your brother *from your heart*.”

Jesus talks about forgiving others many times. Some of them are: in the Lord’s Prayer “Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us”, in the Beatitudes “Blessed are those who are merciful to others, God will be merciful to them,” and on the cross “Father, forgive them because they know not what they do.” The story of the prodigal son is about a father who forgives his son who has done a terrible wrong against him, but his brother cannot forgive him and feels resentment and bitterness towards the prodigal.

When we forgive someone who has wronged us, we recognize that person as a human who makes mistakes. Forgiving someone lifts a burden of anger and bitterness from our hearts and allows us to clearly see that person’s humanity. We must also be able to forgive ourselves for the wrongs and mistakes we have made, and if possible apologize to those we have wronged.

#Merciful to Others

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~ BETTY HEDGES | HANDBELL CHOIR, DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, ST. MARY’S CHAPTER

Wednesday THIRD WEEK OF LENT

READ: DEUTERONOMY 4:1-2, 5-9

MATTHEW 5:17-19

PSALM 78:1-6 *

I have begun researching my family tree and have uncovered many stories of old. Spending time reading narratives written by different deceased family members, looking at faded photographs and reading old newspaper articles and letters has given me a new sense of admiration and belonging to my ancestors. Some of the stories I am proud of and others I wouldn't want to repeat to the next generation. Uncovering these stories has made the past come to life! Each of our families has a unique tapestry that has been woven by those who lived before us. Coincidentally, I think Psalm 78 is reminding us to listen to the stories of our Lord and share them with the next generation. This Psalm was written by Asaph, a prophet and a poet and was one of King David's three chief musicians. He is reminding us to take time to listen to the stories from the Bible and pass them on to our children.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the people in our lives that told us the stories of Jesus and shared their faith with us. We also pray that you help us become the next generation of storytellers of the greatest story of all time, the life and teachings of Jesus and help spread his Love. Amen.

#Storytelling

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~ WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY FOR DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Thursday THIRD WEEK OF LENT

READ: JEREMIAH 7:23-28

LUKE 11:14-23 *

PSALM 95:6-11

When I was reading these verses from Luke, I was reminded of something that happened to our daughter when she first attended the Visitation Academy in Frederick. A nun, who was a Novice, told her that if she did not become Catholic, she would not get into heaven. Needless to say, this little girl was broken hearted and was crying when I picked her up. I don't believe that Jesus meant anything like that when he said, "Anyone who is not with me, is against me."

We would all like to have a miracle when we want something to happen that is so dear to us, but if we did get a miracle I doubt that we would think it was from Satan. If we wished for something that could stop all the fighting and killing of innocent people in this world, it certainly would be a miracle from God. I pray for this every day.

Without Faith, the people who lived in Jesus' time, would certainly question His miracle, but do we question much of what happens today because we do not have enough Faith? Many people do, and I pray, that if we have Faith in Jesus Christ, we will get through those tough times we all seem to have at one time or another.

Pray every day to have the Faith we all need. Also, pray for those who have no Faith to be forgiven. God loves each of us and forgives our sins with open arms.

#Miracle

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~ ANN STALEY SMITH | AN ALL SAINTS' MEMBER FOR 84 YEARS

READ: HOSEA 14:1-9

MARK 12:28-34 *

PSALM 81:8-14

I remember attending church as a child. It was a Greek Orthodox Church in Lowell, Massachusetts—one of five Greek Orthodox churches in that small city, all built by immigrants and first generation Americans. It was a beautiful building filled with mosaic icons, many with gold accents that sparkled in the candle light and caught my imagination as I kneeled and prayed and believed that God was right there—in that space. I could feel his loving arms wrap around me as I walked on plush carpet and the smell of incense filled the air and I saw the gentle eyes and hearts of this community of faith and love. I longed for that feeling of love and wholeness to stay with me and I remember how illusive that feeling was once the week and routine began again on Monday morning. I remember listening to the readings and sermons and being confused and frightened by many of the Old Testament stories of the punishing God. I was afraid to be ‘bad.’ Afraid that God wouldn’t love me—that I would be cast off a cliff or thrown into the fires of hell for being angry at my parents, or hitting my brother. I longed to be enfolded in God’s loving arms—always and yet I was so fearful of the punishment that I surely deserved.

This reading reminds me of an ‘aha’ moment that came to me here at All Saints’. Maybe it was because I had two children of my own and that I was beginning to understand what it means to truly love—unconditionally and wholly. God doesn’t want to punish us.

When we experience difficult times or when we make mistakes or find ourselves struggling with illness, watching people we love suffer—in those times, God isn’t punishing us. He is right there, struggling with us and always, always holding us in his loving arms. There is no ‘burnt offering’, there is no sacrifice that we can offer—His love for us is unconditional and that is all he asks in return. That we love Him. And that we wrap our arms around our neighbors—around our friends, around those ‘others’ we encounter who may look different, may behave differently. With this commandment to love—God has really made life so very simple. We love God and we love one another. We serve God and we serve one another—in fact, to love and serve one another IS to love and serve God. So simple, so beautiful—why do we still struggle?

#Unconditional Love

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Saturday THIRD WEEK OF LENT

READ: ISAIAH 7:10-14

PSALM 45 OR PSALM 40:5-11 *

CANTICLE 15

HEBREWS 10:4-10

LUKE 1:26-38

Psalm 40 is a King David song of prayers for help from God and deliverance. David had horrific perils during his life. During these times he would pray to God for help and patiently wait for God's guidance and deliverance. God heard his prayers and delivered him from his pit. David was so grateful to the Lord and praised Him to all the people. This song praises God's power and might and His enduring steadfast love of us. During my life when I encounter major perils, I always go to God with faithful prayers for help and deliverance. Sometimes, I worry that He is not hearing me, but continue praying and waiting. Then while praying one day, He makes His presence known and I know He has heard my prayers and will keep me safe through the peril. I continue praising God and praying until the danger is resolved knowing that He is with me to keep me safe.

Psalm 40 reminds us all of God's power and might and His enduring steadfast love of us. When we are in peril in our lives, He is there. We only need to keep our faith and trust in God and pray to Him in earnest for His guidance and deliverance.

#Guidance

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~ KAY KITCHEN | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, ST. MARY'S

READ: 1 SAMUEL 16:1-13 *
EPHESIANS 5:8-14
JOHN 9:1-41
PSALM 23

But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him: for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. — 1 Samuel 16: 7

Samuel is reminded by the Lord in the passage above that we mortal humans are too quick to see things or judge people by their outward appearance. We *look* with a critical eye based on the perception of idealized, physical beauty or traits—rather than applying a reasoned, compassionate, consideration of a person's whole character, in order to *see* and recognize a person's attributes, or inner beauty. What a surprise to be reminded that this was evidently a human imperfection, attributable to Old Testament persons in Samuel's day as well as our own. I would, however, hasten to claim that we modern folk are especially *victimized* by the ubiquitous, relentless, commercialism that pits stark, contrasting traits against each other with the goal of *boosting sales*: beautiful versus ugly; popular versus undesirable; confident versus weak, new or young versus old (ouch!).

In the big picture analysis, I hope you will agree that *true beauty* is to be found in the recognition of core human character traits we admire and strive for as Christians: open-mindedness, generosity, loyalty, empathy, forgiveness, and compassion to name a few.

Concluding this topic of superficial versus heartfelt considerations, let me quote the late American composer, musician, satirical lyricist (and seldom heralded Biblical scholar) Frank Zappa, who questioned in song, "what's the ugliest part of your body?" The answer: "Some say your toes, some say your nose... but I think it's your MIND." May the Lord guide us to *look with our hearts* rather than *see with our minds*. The greater human sins are vanity and hypocrisy, not halitosis. Amen.

#Compassion

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~ BRUCE FLEMING | BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE, CHIEF COLLECTION TELLER

READ: ISAIAH 65:17-25
JOHN 4:43-54 *
PSALM 30:1-6, 11-13

“Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told them, “you will never believe.”— John 4:48

As I read, prayed, and pondered over and over again while reading my assigned readings; I kept coming back to the statement from Jesus. I kept coming back to how it speaks to me today. We are living in a world if it were not seen, is just not to be believed. Our world is larger than it was, and yet so much smaller. When I think back to when I was a young girl, my world was just where I was living; my town, my school. Maybe I might say it was just my hometown, and as far away as where my grandparents lived, which was about fifty miles. I did listen to the world news on the radio and I read *Life Magazine*. I cried and prayed about what I saw on the new reels in theaters. I believed that the things that I read about would not happen here in my little world. I was safe. God would keep us safe. I prayed for the people *over there*. I cried because of all they were going through, BUT---then we were at WAR! Oh, I was so afraid. Yet, I also think that was the starting point where I began to hold on to my faith in God, to pray for all of us. My world started to get larger. It was a time, while as a young girl, that I learned to pray and to keep close to God. My faith was a comfort to me as I lived through all the unknown happenings around me.

I feel at this present time of my life, things are very different again. This statement that Jesus spoke rings forever in my heart. I see that my world is very, very small. But I spend so much time on what the world is going through, and not what is happening right around me in Frederick. I seem to see more and more folks turning from faith and spending all their time in believing whatever they hear or see on TV, Facebook, or anything from the outside world. I hardly know what is even happening to the people next door to me, let alone folks living in my own hometown. I am not living in the here and now. If I started to see people right here with me now, listen to them, try to feel what they are feeling; we could connect, love, forgive, and find where God is right now in each of us. I want and must get back to believing in the unseen and live by faith alone. Faith, hope and love all work together to shield us as we journey through this world. I did that more as a young person, and now as an older adult I see what Jesus meant in his words. If we don't see it, we will not believe—so very, very sad. I do feel I can truly attest to this; LIVING BY FAITH, RATHER THAN SIGHT, ENABLES YOU TO SEE GOD'S GLORY.

For me, I truly feel with all the hell in this world and we here in the US are facing by our own hands, I with all my heart can still feel God's peace and miraculous

signs and wonders around me. I truly feel it as I say prayers each morning and each evening. I can only change myself, but thank God for placing faithful people around me each day. Without my unseen faith in God, I may have missed the signs and wonders God offers us each day. So I ask God each day to deepen my faith and help me in my disbelief.

My closing prayer, is from our Prayer Book, page 100

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being; we humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of life (today) we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#Living by Faith

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~ LOU NUTTER | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING , PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

Tuesday FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: EZEKIEL 47:1-9, 12 *

JOHN 5:1-18

PSALM 46:1-8

For me, the days of summer in Frederick County are heralded by the fresh fruits that are ripening in the fields. First it is the strawberries, so sweet that many do not make it into the gathering pail, but are eaten as soon as they are picked. Blueberries are a favorite of mine. I don't have to bend over to pick them. Later in the summer fields and orchards are filled with peaches, red raspberries, and last of all, crisp, juicy apples. Imagine living in a place where fresh fruit, locally grown, would be available all year long. Sounds like heaven to me.

The reading from Ezekiel states that the trees bear fruit all through the year "because the water for them flows from the sanctuary." When we enter the sanctuary of the church to receive Eucharist, we are cleansed, strengthened, and renewed by Jesus; the Living Water. At the end of mass we are called to go out into the world to love and to serve. Nourished by the Living Water we are able to bring Christ to those we encounter throughout the week.

#The Living Water

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~ ANONYMOUS FOR THE DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Wednesday FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: ISAIAH 49:8-15

JOHN 5:19-29

PSALM 145:8-19 *

As I have gotten older, I realize how things have changed, and not just due to technological advancements, but due in part to how we as God's children have in some cases, wandered away from him. We have become impatient with everything. We want everything now, although I still prefer to receive my correspondence the good old fashioned way via snail- mail, rather than a text. Human interaction has changed and now there are the emotional undertones of loneliness, despair, doubt, alienation, sadness, disappointment, grief, uncertainty, fear, and unfulfillment. The existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre speaks of "la peur et le tremblement" (fear and trembling) as we confront the validation of our existence. What are we to do amongst the madness of our moral, economical, and emotional crises of our lives? Do we pursue an ill-fated quest for personal worth based upon earthly values? Have we forgotten to whom we belong? We are God's children, created in His image, to love one another.

Is there anything more comforting than to know that our God, who so loved the world, is always at work with his beloved son, our savior Jesus Christ, to love us and to be available to us. David's psalm of praise tells us that the Lord is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger, and rich in love. During our moments of unrest, we must remain mindful of the presence of God's love because "the Lord is near to all who call on him in truth." As we re-direct our fear to the comfort and knowledge of God's mercy and grace, we can in the words of Isaiah "shout for joy" and burst into song for the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

#God's Children

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~ MONIQUE ABNER | LECTOR

Thursday FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: EXODUS 32:7-14
JOHN 5:30-47
PSALM 106:6-7, 19-23,
EXODUS 32: 7- 14 *

In this reading from Exodus, we are reminded in a very clear way, that God does get angry. This, for me, is a challenging concept to digest. I don't like to think of God as being angry, especially with me. What we are also reminded of is how easily God forgives. In my mind, this is the real message in this passage.

If you read the whole of Exodus 32, you learn that the Israelites became tired and anxious waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain. In their state of anxiety, they quickly return to their old ways of worshiping false gods and defying God's commandments to them.

Does any of this sound familiar? It does to me. I regretfully admit that there have been times in my life, during periods of angst and difficulty, rather than turn to God for guidance or solace, I acted in ways that were unhealthy and exactly opposite what God would want from me.

Although I have never heard God tell me directly that He was angry or disappointed in me, I am sure He was. I was angry and disappointed in myself. Fortunately, God is not only forgiving, but patient as well. I cannot say how it comes about, but there is a powerful feeling of comfort and solace when I know God has forgiven me.

We humans are a flawed lot. We anger ourselves, others and God; sometimes consciously and other times without awareness. The good news is God is always right there, waiting for us to come to our senses and welcome us into His loving and forgiving arms. Nothing we say or do can separate us from His perfect love. Just as a parent loves a child completely and unconditionally, this is God's gift and promise to us.

#Patience

offer your own images and reflections @allsaintsfredmd on Facebook

~ CATHY GUZAUSKAS | FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE, RECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Friday FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: WISDOM: 2:1A, 12-24
JOHN 7:1-2, 10, 25-30
PSALM 34:15-22
EXODUS 32: 7- 14 *

Moses has not returned to the People. In his absence Aaron has had a molded calf made to be worshiped. But, this did not go unnoticed to God. He has spent several days with Moses preparing two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. God tells Moses, "Let Me alone, that my wrath burn hot against them, and I may consume them." Moses pleaded with the Lord. "So the Lord relented."

How do we disappoint God? Can He see what we are doing and hear what we are saying? It was Moses who spoke with God. He reminded God all that God had said about the people, from Abraham to that present time. Who do we have to stand up for us?

As we approach Easter, think of the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter Sunday. We owe it all to Him.

#Sacrifice

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~ SARA BROWLOWE | DAUGHTERS OF THE KINGS, LECTOR

Saturday FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: JEREMIAH 11:18-20

JOHN 7:37-52

PSALM 7:6-11 *

Many times in my teaching career, I was surprised how much anger and hostility could be within a young child of only five or six years of age. How can a youngster be so sad or feel such a violent rage? Like an origami swan, once I unfolded the repeated disappointments and daily struggles this child had already encountered, I could comprehend the need for the child to release all the negative feelings and emotions pent up inside. The child needed a safe environment to *let loose* and release what was brewing inside. I would somehow try to diffuse the child's anger and develop some connection with him/her. I stepped back from judging the child, but prayed for the direction and compassion to reach this child, and to be a positive beacon of hope. I think in Psalm 7, God is reminding us He is the judge. "The Lord shall judge the people; judge me, O Lord, according to my integrity that is in me." When people act out in anger, hatred, rage and bitterness—it's not our job to judge. Pray and act out of love, compassion and kindness.

#Judge Not

offer your own images and reflections @allsaintsfredmd on Facebook

~ JUNE MILLER | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, ST. MARY'S CHAPTER,
PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

READ: PSALM 130 A SONG OF ASCENTS *
EZEKIEL 37:1-14

ROMANS 8:6-11
JOHN 11:1-45

Ascents means beginning from a low place, one rises repeatedly, similar to mounting a ladder. *Song* indicates praise with joyful music. One popular image is Jacob fleeing the wrath of his twin brother Esau whom he had twice cheated of his first-born inheritance rights. One night, as Jacob slept outdoors, he dreamed of angels ascending a ladder to heaven. This was God's way of assuring Jacob of his redemption.

In Psalm 130, you the reader are addressed with an appeal to God for mercy, begging compassionate forgiveness of your sins. Sins can be interpreted as wrong choices human make daily. Some might call these "mistakes" from which one might learn to grow as an adult. Sins can be intentional or not; small or great. It is the Lord's prerogative to forgive them.

The psalmist offers hope by saying, "in his word I put my hope," indicating that the Lord's word is readily available through reading scripture—that is, your Bible.

Or, the word might be that small still voice sought in answer to prayer. You wait for God's reply; you wait for forgiveness.

The Psalm assures that hope is justified, because the Lord shows "unfailing love" with full redemption. You need only ask. God forgives and redeems you for your mistakes, your sins.

The forty day Lenten period can be compared to that forty day journey into the wilderness which Jesus endured after baptism. For Christians, Lent ends with celebrating the resurrection of Christ who lived in historical times as human, but overcame death to live again. This is the ultimate promise of redemption which God offers sinners.

Your life continues through Jesus despite your constant sinning. Each day you seek mercy. Each day you are reminded of God's great promise: unfailing love, redemption, and everlasting life through the example of Christ's resurrection.

Psalm 130 is a song of ascents: let us lift our spirits in response to Easter's eternal promise. Hallelujah!

#Hope

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~ JOHN GEORGE | LECTOR, CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Monday FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: SUSANNA 1-9, 15-29, 34-40, 41-62

JOHN 8:1-11 OR JOHN 8: 12-20

PSALM 23 *

When you're weary, feeling small,
When tears are in your eyes
I will dry them all
I'm on your side
When times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down — **Paul Simon**

Just as the song is a promise of help and support in the face of adversity, the comforting images of the 23rd Psalm are a reflection of God's promise to be present and to provide the strength to face whatever comes my way.

As someone with chronic anxiety and bouts of depression, it is in those dark times when it can be most difficult to reach out for help or trust that it will be there. And in those times when I'm most vulnerable, the image of lying down in a green pasture or beside still water reminds me to stop. Be still and listen.

Sometimes I literally have to go put my toes in the dirt or lean against a tree to get grounded enough to be able to slow down. And it is always in the stillness; the eye of the storm that I am able to receive The Comforter.

I've had my moments (too many to count or to want to admit) where I thought I knew exactly what the help should be or look like. I've been angry with God when it didn't go my way. Even in those times, when I'm frustrated or feeling abandoned, when I stop, get still and listen, I receive exactly what I need even when it doesn't resemble anything that I thought it should be.

The psalm is not just about comfort, but the everlasting promise that I will be cared for; my needs will be met and when I truly surrender my ego to the presence of the Creator, I am truly dwelling in the house of the Lord. It is in the surrendering that wisdom and guidance come and a heart full of gratitude follows.

Take a moment to visualize a green pasture, a quiet stream. Immerse yourself in the calm grounding energy of creation and allow the Spirit of the Creator infuse you with strength and whatever else you may need; just for this moment; confident that each moment will bring whatever it is you need.

#Comforter offer your own images and reflections @allsaintsfredmd on Facebook

~ GAYE SHELLEY | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, HISTORIC CHURCH CHOIR

READ: NUMBERS 21:4-9
JOHN 8:21-30
PSALM 102:15-22 *

As I was reading this passage from Psalm 102, certain words stood out for me. Fear. Despair. Destitute. Condemned. Despised. It made me anxious. It made me uncomfortable. I didn't want to read this psalm. I think of Psalms as songs to God, uplifting and joyous. Not about fear and sadness.

I re-read the passage and read it yet again as part of the larger Psalm. It was then that I noticed the other words. Mighty. Revere. Glory. Respond. Sanctuary. Praise. Much better; words of encouragement and hope! But what was the message for me?

So, on to a final read. And there it was; the word that tied things together and spoke to me. "Prayer."

In the end, a big part of the message for me in this passage is one of forgiveness and caring; redemption and love. The things you find in a relationship.

No matter how low we get or how badly we mess things up, God is there to pick us up—we only have to ask, to pray! But most of us seem to take our sweet time about it. The Psalm seems to emphasize the point that, all too often, we look back on our lives and feel regret about things we have or haven't done. When things are going wrong people are sometimes reluctant to turn to God, thinking, "It's too late now," or "Why did I wait so long?" It's never too late with God. And there was even a little bonus nugget about "future generations" in the psalm. The relationships we establish with God can inspire others—our kids, our friends, our families—to do the same.

When the earthly things are crumbling around us and we think God couldn't possibly love us, we need to remember that He won't abandon us. God is always there, right with us every step of the way . . . patiently waiting for us to come to Him; waiting for that relationship with us; waiting for us to talk to Him, and all the while forgiving us for taking so awfully long. He knows what we need before we do.

I thought of how sad it must make God that we often turn to him and start talking to him only when we get to a low point in our lives. And at a time when we are talking from a spirit of despair or maybe even anger, instead of joy or love. And I feel guilty thinking of those parts of my life I spent only talking to God during the low points. We wouldn't talk to a dear friend or loved one only when we are sad and upset; we talk to them at all times in our lives, when we are happy, when we

need encouragement, or just to share our day. It's part of having a relationship.

So where does that leave God? Sadly, the One who loves us best has to wait. How one-sided our relationship with God must seem to Him. So, how do we fix that piece? Pretty simple, really. Pray. And don't just talk to God when you are low. He wants to share all of your life. Reflect, talk, listen, all the things you do to establish a relationship—just like you would with a friend or loved one. Lent is a perfect time to begin, and it can start with a simple prayer.

Thank you, God, for loving me.

#Prayer

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~ TINA BUTCHER | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, ALTAR GUILD, VESTRY

Wednesday FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: DANIEL 3:14-20, 24-28 *

JOHN 8:31-42

CANTICLE 2 OR 13

The Old Testament reading for today is from the book of Daniel and is the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace. It may be familiar to you from your Sunday School days or it may not. At any rate, I thought it was a strange reading for Lent. The tales in Daniel are from the period of the Babylonian Exile (598-538 BCE) and are meant to give encouragement and hope to the Jews. Three young Jewish men have been taken into captivity and given Chaldean names -Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, has built a huge gold statue and he demands that all his people to bow down and worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse and Nebuchadnezzar has them bound and thrown into the blazing fire. When the king checks on them later he sees that they are no longer bound, unharmed and walking around. Additionally, he sees that there is a fourth figure in the furnace who has the appearance of an angel or a god. He orders them to come out of the fire and proclaims that there is no other God who is able to deliver men from such an ordeal other than the God of the Jews.

During a time of Lenten self-examination, I ask myself to what lengths would I go to stand up for my faith. Would I give up and take the easier (more popular or safer)

way out? Would I remain true to God? I hope I am never put to such an extreme test but we are being tested in smaller ways every day.

A second comment about this passage is that it re-enforces the point that no matter what trials or difficulties we face, God will be with us. God is with us in the fiery furnace! Praise be to God!

#Devotion

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~ JUDY HAINES | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, ST. MARY'S CHAPTER, ALTAR GUILD,
WORSHIP TEAM

Thursday FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: GENESIS 17:1-8
JOHN 8:51-59
PSALM 105:4-11 *

Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually.

Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered. — Psalm 105: 4-5

In Psalm 105, we are reminded to seek the Lord and his strength at all times. I seem to call on the Lord fervently, when I'm experiencing a difficult situation, feeling the pains of grief, or when I or someone I love is encountering a health issue. When life is flowing smoothly and effortlessly, I need to be reminded to call on the Lord with as much passion. In *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young puts it beautifully, "Seek My Face, Speak to Me, and I will light up your mind."

Heavenly Father, Remind us to seek you in good times as well as in bad times. Open our eyes that we may see all the wonderful things you have done for us. Open our ears that we may hear the wisdom you have spoken to us. Let our voices speak gratitude for all that you have provided for us. Let all our senses feel your continual guidance and strength and share Your love with others. Amen.

#Seek the Lord

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~ JUNE MILLER | DAUGHTERS OF THE KING, ST. MARY'S CHAPTER,
PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

READ: PSALM 18:1-7 *
JEREMIAH 20:7-13
JOHN 10:31-42

"I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." — Psalm 18:1-2

Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked." — Psalm 18:7

Is it a contradiction? How is it that in the opening verses of Psalm 18 there is the comfort of hearing that God is our fortress and yet just a few lines later in verse 7, the earth is shaking and trembling? What if the psalm had been written with verse 7 first and then followed by the powerful image of God as our protector?

In the year 2016 I have questioned many things. Why do the people of Turkey and the Middle East have to be subjected to so much violence? Why are the refugees who are searching for safety, turned away from the very protection they seek? Why does it seem like equal rights in the United States are taking steps backwards? Why do countries like Haiti continue to be battered by natural disasters and seemingly hopeless poverty?

Does the psalm have its ending at verse 7? I read ahead to verse 28.

"It is you who light my lamp; the LORD, my God, lights up my darkness."

And then I read verse 30.

"This God—his way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all who take refuge in him."

We are not promised that the earth will not shake or that we will be kept out of darkness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, let us allow the God who was, is, and always will be, to be our stronghold and deliverer. In times of darkness, confusion, and questioning, let us be comforted by knowing that our Lord promises to be our Light in the darkness.

#Refuge

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Saturday FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

READ: PSALM 85: 1-7 *
EZEKIEL 37: 21-28 *
JOHN 11: 45-53

Show us your constant love, O Lord and give us your saving help. — Psalm 85:7

No matter what we do, even the worst of sins, God shows us constant love. That's how we heal wounds, come together and show unity. In Ezekiel 37, God brings the people together into one nation, one land, even though they have betrayed him.

I think along with love comes compassion and forgiveness. In our everyday lives it seems so easy to experience the opposite of these things. In the larger global experience we see this reported in the media all of the time. War, oppression, famine, political disagreement; it's so easy to see the negative. Even in our own church community we face challenges that have to be worked through to bring our parish together and make good, thoughtful decisions. I think sometimes it's easier to point out the negative, but in order to grow as a person and a parish community, we can look at Jesus' sacrifice for us and try to live by his example, by bringing the "scattered people of God" together into one body. In order to prosper and grow, as a person, as a church member, and as a person partaking of this short life on our planet earth, we can do very small things each day to be compassionate, understanding, and forgiving that can make an impact in our world.

I often think of how my parents took refugees into our home in the 1970s and how that changed the perspective of my world forever. This was hard, we had to experience many things outside of our comfort zone, but it made my siblings and me stronger, more compassionate adults. It's so much easier to show love to others when you know God is showing us constant love. You just have to let it happen! Open your heart and mind to others' beliefs, opinions and customs. We don't have to agree, but be open. Be receiving of love and forgiveness.

We sometimes need to experience the lowest of low to appreciate what God has done for all people. All people, not just some. I pray that we can prosper, come together and be good stewards of his Temple, so that our big world is a little smaller each day.

#One Nation

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~ LAURA CLARKE | VESTRY, FORMATION TEACHER, OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Palm Sunday HOLY WEEK

READ: ISAIAH 50:4-9A

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 *

MATTHEW 26:14-27:66 OR MATTHEW 27:11-54

PSALM 31:9-16

It might feel like Christmas ended some time ago. But it never really did. The part about presents and red and green trimmings and two turtle doves—that part ended. But the important part about God taking human form as Jesus—that’s with us now more than ever. And with this reading we are reminded about that baby and what He really is becoming for all of us now. The undifferentiated hope in a newborn that started last December now culminates as a new and lasting attitude.

To lead us, God sent His incarnation to be born, to live, and to walk among us as the person Jesus. And to reach God’s people, Jesus let go of anything godly about himself. He relinquished his natural status as a “the form of God” and became human. To reach all of God’s children he demoted himself socially, adopting a status accorded to that of a slave. This is reminiscent of other scripture that tells us the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served. And, as we will watch today and through this week, Jesus gave up his legal status by “becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross.” For all this, Jesus’ name is exalted.

We can’t do what Jesus did, but I do believe we can adopt the attitude he took. We can relinquish presumption, arrogance, and fear. We can choose humility, unconditional love, and kindness. This is the real differentiation of that long ago sleeping infant—a startling gift, ready to awaken in all of us.

#Kindness

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~ SARA BRO | PRESIDENT, DAUGHTERS OF THE KING,
INSPiRED DAUGHTERS CHAPTER

READ: ISAIAH 40:1-9
HEBREWS 9: 11-15
JOHN 12:1-11 *
PSALM 36:5-11

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, “Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?” This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and because he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, “Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.” — John 12: 4-8

On reading this passage I was especially impressed by two things. First, the difference in the world view of Judas and Mary. Judas’ economy was one of scarcity where one must hoard, and even steal, in order to survive. When Jesus said, “The poor you always have with you,” he was not minimizing the suffering that poverty can bring, nor even the inevitability of poverty. He was describing one of the consequences of Judas’ economy of scarcity. Indeed, around Judas there would always be poverty because Judas was afraid to give freely. On the other hand, Mary believed in the economy of God, which is an economy of abundance where one can give freely with an open heart, and even extravagant gifts of devotion are acceptable to God.

Secondly is the contrast in trust between Judas and Mary. It is unlikely that Judas really intended for Jesus to die when he betrayed him. He was probably trying to force God’s hand. He was probably trying to make Jesus use his power to establish his kingdom by force then and there. Judas believed that he knew better than Jesus what ought to happen, and he did his best to make it happen with terrible results. He must have been filled with overwhelming regret which caused his suicide.

In contrast, Mary was willing to wait on God’s way—whatever it was. She must have been aware of the danger to Jesus. Yet her brother had been raised from the dead, and she knew that God can bring victory even from death. The traditional anointing for burial started with the hands and feet. Kings and priests were anointed on the head. Mary poured her costly ointment on Jesus’s feet. Jesus said, “Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial.” Eugene Peterson paraphrases Jesus’ words this way: “She is anticipating and honoring the day of my burial.”

Judas and Mary—contrasts in faith. Judas, stuck in an economy of scarcity; Mary, participating in God’s economy of abundance. Judas trying to force his own plan on Jesus; Mary, accepting God’s way, and believing in God’s ultimate triumph.

#Economy of Abundance

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~ MARY YOUNG | LAY EUCHARIST VISITOR (LEM), LECTOR

Tuesday HOLY WEEK

READ: PSALM 71:1-14

ISAIAH 49:1-7

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31 *

JOHN 12:20-36

Paul seems to be telling us that salvation is met through the heart and not the mind. God’s foolishness is wiser than our wisdom and God’s weakness is stronger than our strength. Indeed, God has made foolish the wisdom of the world. No matter how wise anyone is, God decided to save those who believe.

This passage speaks to me about the conundrum of faith. God gave us minds that propelled us to the moon and sent spacecraft into the, “vast expanse of interstellar space.” Minds that harnessed energy of the atom and gave us aching beauty of music.

But these extraordinary minds can seek salvation only through the faith in their hearts. Faith can’t be explained by equations or formulas. Faith, Paul says, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1).

So, I’ll let myself go and follow my heart...I’m sure I’ll get where I need to be . . . with faith.

#Salvation

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~ MARK GIBSON | BUDGET & FINANCE, CHOIR, LECTOR

Wednesday HOLY WEEK

READ: PSALM 70

ISAIAH 50:4-9A,

HEBREWS 12:1-3 *

JOHN 13:21-32

As I read these verses in Hebrews, I'm reminded of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and the time a group of us visited her shrine. While touring, I saw quotes from her and one in particular stayed with me.

The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner he wills it; and thirdly to do it because it is his will."

—**Elizabeth Ann Seton**

I feel the scripture and her quote are similar. To follow God and apply God's ways in our lives.

I try to carry myself in that manner of being obedient and to continue to work on myself when I fall short. For example: there have been many times, while I was playing Goalie for my soccer team, that the game has gotten out of control. Competitiveness between certain teams goes to the extreme with yelling, cursing and over zealousness when fighting for the ball to the point of hurting opposing players. For the most part, I try to keep my cool and not get involved in the pettiness on the field. I try to calm my fellow teammates down and help them focus on the task at hand. By studying this scripture, it has allowed me to consciously apply it to everyday life.

As we are in the middle of the week and the weight of the world is on our shoulders, we must continue to run this Christian race that's before us with the patience and faith to endure any sin that will challenge us.

#Follow God

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~ CLARENCE HARPER | CO-LEADER, WORSHIP TEAM; RECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Maunder Thursday HOLY WEEK

READ: PSALM 116,
EXODUS 12:1-4, 11-14
1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26,
JOHN 13:1-17, 31B-35 *

WE ARE LOVED. And yet, this day, this sacred day, feels like a slow decent into the solemnity of that love.

Jesus' life was a continual journey of deeply investing himself, of letting go, of rooting and of uprooting, of settling and of moving on. Throughout his ministry, Jesus fully engaged with those whom he found himself to be in relationship with, despite knowing that his itinerant ministry would call him to another place, to another time. No ache could have been more profound than as he gathered with his disciples on this Passover. Passover, the ancient Jewish feast of liberation, is the story of God's hearkening to the anguished cries of his beloved children by responding with power to bring them to a glorious new freedom. Jesus is at Passover with his friends—his own, the passage calls them—even as he knows what lies ahead. Tears must have hung heavily within his heart for his impending betrayal and denial by those whom he loves. In the midst of this feast, Jesus gives his disciples a model for how they are to live their lives without him.

The foot washing in this scripture was a common custom in Jesus' day. The roads of Palestine were dirt. In dry weather, they were inches deep in dust and in wet, they were liquid mud. The shoes ordinary people wore were sandals, which gave their feet little protection against the dust or the mud. For that reason there were always great water-pots at the door of a house; and a servant was there with a pitcher and a towel to wash the soiled feet of the guests as they came in. Jesus' little company of disciples had no servants. So, the duties which servants would ordinarily have carried out in wealthier circles must have been shared among each of Jesus' followers. *NOT TONIGHT.* Instead, Jesus willingly performs the menial task of a humble servant. In this deceptively simple act of foot washing, Jesus gives his disciples a visible affirmation of his love for each of them, which he conjoins at the heart with this commandment: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34-35).

I believe that foot washing has little to do with water—rather I feel that the humility of service can become for us—if we are open to it—an evolved spiritual cleansing and nourishment—one that opens us not only to experience the unconditional love of God but to share that same pure love within and among our spiritually tattered

world. How often have you heard someone say when they have worked in a homeless shelter or on a medical mission, “I feel I received much more than I gave.” *This is what love looks like.*

WE ARE LOVED. This Maundy Thursday as we experience the slow decent into the solemnity of God’s love for us—let us feel the cleansing nourishment of our spirits in preparation for the brilliance of the sheer magnitude of God’s love in the glorious resurrection to come.

#Humility of Service

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~ THE REVEREND SANDRA KAY RICE | RETIRED VOCATIONAL DEACON,
DAUGHTERS OF THE KING,
ST. MARY’S CHAPTER

Good Friday HOLY WEEK

READ: ISAIAH 52: 13-53:12

HEBREWS 10:16-25 OR HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5: 7-9 *

JOHN 18: 1-19:42

PSALM 22

Both epistle choices for Good Friday come from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews as does the epistle appointed for Christmas morning. How poignant that we hear from this letter at both the celebration of Christ's birth and at the remembrance of His death. At these pivotal moments we hear assurance of Christ's divinity and His humanity. Paul writes that through this dual nature, Christ brings about our salvation. Not only are our sins forgiven, they are even forgotten. If there is no longer a need to make an offering for sin, we can let go of self-recrimination. I wonder in awe at how great is our God who can accept our rejection of His Son, feel that pain because of His human nature, and yet through His death on Good Friday, bring about total forgiveness of our sins. His faithful promise is for everyone—not just once, but for all time. (*Credit: EfM Manual "The Letter to the Hebrews"*)

The last sentence exhorts us to action in response to His gift. The word "provoke" prods us to act towards others in such a way as to cause them to also act. I'm reminded that children's songs often speak truths simply as with these lines: "Love is a circle, it knows no bounds. The more you give the more comes around." Paul's words are a call to us to live our faith in community, to worship together and be a source of support and encouragement to one another. A later verse in the Letter to the Hebrews is the familiar one, *Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares* (Hebrews 13:1-2). I pray that this Good Friday we accept this exhortation to a renewed energy to hands on pastoral care and outreach joyfully engaged in together.

#Christ's Divinity

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~ JODY DEVENEY | RECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE, ALTAR GUILD,
WORSHIP COORDINATOR

Holy Saturday HOLY WEEK

READ: LAMENTATIONS 3:1-9, 19-24 *

PSALM 31:1-4, 15-16

1 PETER 4:1-8

JOHN 19:38-42

I am the one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

— **Lamentations 19-23**

In silence we wait. We wait as we embrace a still and somber Saturday. We have just laid our Savior to rest in the tomb and covered the cross with tears of grief. Even though we know new hope will rise come dawn, today we would be wise to wait. Instead of rushing in the Easter morn, we are invited to sink into and embrace the sorrow of Holy Saturday. A day, a time, when we can join with the poet of Lamentations in his juxtaposition of claiming the horrors found in our world and the hope longed for in God's ceaseless love and never ending mercies.

As the poet cries out in despair and disbelief, he draws upon vivid imagery to convey to God, and us as readers, the destruction of his beloved city, community, and life around him. Nevertheless, he clings to his hope in God's steadfast love and boundless mercies. He cries out for God's presence to be evident in his time of desperation. Perhaps we too, can join him in lifting our voices of sorrows to God. Naming and claiming the destruction and tragedies around us, and inviting God's ceaseless love and endless mercies to break in and bring new hope.

On this most holy and somber Saturday, may we too wait in silence, embrace the sorrows of the world, and then welcome in God's boundless love and mercy so the renewed hope of Easter can once again take root within us come morning.

#Silence

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~ THE REVEREND JESSICA HOLTHUS | ASSOCIATE RECTOR, ALL SAINTS' PARISH

He is Risen! Happy Easter!

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