

At Home Retreat:

Lent 2008

Downtown Chapel Roman Catholic Parish

By:

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INTRODUCTION

Lent stirs up restlessness in me. The forty-day recipe of prayer ultimately makes me hunger for the new things only God can accomplish in me, but first it hollows out my heart. It strips me bare of my pretense, selfishness and lack of compassion. Jesus asks me to begin Lent in my gut, to physically empty myself and to make me aware of how I starve for Him.

Jesus faced many temptations in the desert sorting out his identity and purpose. Every Lent brings choices for me. I can let go of the externals - eating between meals, my craving for ice cream before bed, or a scotch before a meal - but the real things that are actually eating me are far more important and real. My empty plate must not take the place of my desire to empty my heart to find my real purpose in life, my real self, my place on the earth as a follower of Christ. In Lent, I need to sort out the times I am tempted with choices between real bread and cold stones.

Lent provides all of us with an opportunity to find what is really going to feed us as Christians. We pattern our lives after the One who starved his way past temptations to bring us his real presence every time we remember him. Jesus is not only our way to the cross but the real food that promises to be with us no matter what happens. Collectively, we ache for new life. War still confuses our listening to the Prince of Peace. Hungry people in our neighborhoods call us to eavesdrop again on his commands to feed, visit and heal those who need help. Family infidelities baffle our basic understandings of Jesus' covenant of love with us.

The journey to Easter is indeed a process. That is why I try every year to not gain weight during the journey, to put a muzzle on my judgment of others, and to listen again to my silence and the cries of my neighbors. We show up again to these days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving each with specific needs and longings for God. I suggest taking some time with this retreat to find out what tempts you not to live an authentic life, or not to practice what you believe, or to find out why you cannot forgive yourself when Jesus already has forgiven you. This is real food, the calm for our restlessness.

GOSPEL: Spend some time every day of the week reading and praying the Sunday Gospel from the previous weekend. These Scriptures, the "A" cycle, are the classical texts from the early Church for preparing adults for baptism, confirmation and

Eucharist. You will be amazed at how differently it reads when you ponder the message daily. After reading the sacred texts, ask yourself, “What am I hearing?” The other liturgical texts can be found on our web page.

THEME: Do not be distracted by this spiritual path into the Gospel text. Write your own reflections from what you hear from the Gospel. Keep track of your reflections in a journal or jot them down where you can read them as reminders through the day. This is your retreat, let the Spirit guide you, lovingly.

GUIDANCE: These fill in the blank statements are meant to spark your thoughts and imagination about the Gospels and your life. Take time to write out your thoughts, reactions and insights. There are no wrong answers, only feelings and thoughts from your heart and relationship with God.

PRAYER: Take time each day to write your own prayer. Allow it to come from your heart. Offer to God everything that gets in the way of your relationship. It is in naming suffering that new life happens. Keep track of your prayers, and read them throughout the forty days.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise your will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms do not blow a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you are fasting do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance so that they may appear to have received their reward. When fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

THEME

I long for the healing touch of God. As I give myself to the start of the Lenten season, my forehead becomes a canvas for the sacred brand, the ash-cross. I feel the pressure of the minister's thumb on my dry skin. My face now becomes a billboard for what I believe. Before bed, I look myself in the mirror, and the work begins, not washing it off but learning to live with it. I must learn every year to take the cross from my ruddy complexion to the hardened places of my heart.

The holy mark says I am not alone. I am in the same line with a recent widow, a recovering addict, and a scrubby little boy. The cross marks me, describes my life, and reminds me that even when I am dust a cross will mark the spot of my burial plot. Yet the journey to find new life is intensely lonely. I must be ready to give what I do not want to let go of, I must offer what I would rather keep and I need to change what I most cling to. I ponder the fact that Jesus has led the way, and believers before me have journeyed through the desert.

Seize this spiritual day to ease yourself into quiet. Go to your room, lock the door and open your heart. Find the healing voice of God for you, not the voice of judgment or condemnation. Feel the God who gives you breath and who someday will take your breath away.

GUIDANCE

1. I hesitate this year to be marked with the cross because_____.
2. Lent always congers up images in me about _____.
3. God, if you are listening, I really want _____.
4. If I was honest with you, Jesus, I do not want to let go of _____.
5. God, create in me the desire for _____.

PRAYER

Jesus,

**I am most lonely when I come home, unlock my door, walk in,
close the door, and bolt it shut.**

**The voices of the day, the commotion of the streets, still ring in my ear,
and scatter my thoughts.**

I look for any excuse not to be quiet.

**I fold my socks while the TV blares. I turn up the volume on every techno-gadget,
Not to hear the evening news, but to keep the headlines of my loneliness quiet.**

And then I remember being marked by your cross.

You want more of me than I am ready to give.

But tonight, I will turn down the volume around me,

I will seize the quiet of night; I will sit in the dark and wait for you.

In the hidden silence of me, you will reveal yourself.

AMEN

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday, February 10, 2008

GOSPEL

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, and 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

THEME

I believe less is more. I own fewer possessions because I live among people who carry what little they have on their backs. My priorities change when people just need the basics of life, like underwear and socks and someone to listen to them. Less is more in my tastes preparing a holiday meal. Less is a lot even in the architecture of where I worship, in conversations, in my thought patterns, tokens on my bookshelf, memories I hold, heirlooms from my parents, and especially in my prayer.

Even though I live now with a lot less clutter, the days of Lent invite me deeper into the desert where I usually want to cling to everything around me out of fear of losing everything. This is the Lenten journey, when our thought patterns turn on us, when our organized life becomes full of questions, when our control over our world becomes threatened by the living Christ who desires every aspect of our human heart.

The Lenten desert becomes the place of temptations because it is Jesus who wants us to cling to nothing other than his grace for us. Even the gifts that God has given us, people, talents, and work, can melt into pride, arrogance, and over-exposed egos. The Lenten journey begins in the desert so that we may learn again that even what little we possess ultimately belongs to God. In the desert we learn that nothing stands in the way of God's love and care for us, and that one possession is all we need.

GUIDANCE

1. I know I need to evaluate my relationship with my possessions because ____
2. In this Lent Jesus, I offer you _____.
3. My prayer for others as we begin this journey is _____.
4. Jesus, release my grasp on _____.
5. Jesus, I am tempted in these days in the areas of _____.

PRAYER

Jesus,

Stroll with me into the heat of the desert and help me examine my life.

I give away my extra winter jacket, my jeans that do not fit anymore, and my favorite shirt.

There is more you ask of me.

You call me to cast off the possessions that shroud my soul.

It is not my clothing I need to discard, but how the garments cover me with a false identity.

It is not the amount of money I own, but how the riches protect me from other's needs.

It is not the trinkets on my bookshelf, the heirlooms from my parents, or the health insurance for which I pay, but I must become vulnerable to your call to follow you deeper into the desert.

Trace my name in the sand, count me among your followers, and release me from the temptations of believing I control your invitation to a place where less is more.

Amen

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday, February 17, 2008

GOSPEL

Matthew 17:1-9

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

THEME

I want to learn how to see. I stumble around my world ignoring the reality of everything around me. I see only the things I want to see. My blinders of denial, the downward gaze of my fear, create my own little world where only my needs are met. When I start living the life that is mine and not the life I think I should have my eyes focus beyond me. The despair of the veteran, the loneliness of the widow, the hopelessness of the domestic violence victim, opens my sight to inclusion, love and compassion.

Lent is a new way of seeing. The light of Christ sheds new perspectives on every aspect of our lives. The path becomes clear when we take the time to see Jesus in our midst, to breathe in the life that is meant for us. The journey to the mountain of the Transfiguration gives us a new perspective and clarity on how we are living the life God desires for us. This life is meant for new eyes, a new way of seeing people, those who love us and those who have taught us how to believe and find our purpose in the world.

The journey of Lent does not end in the reassurance or magical moment of this new vision. This vision is for the long distance, to the place of Calvary and beyond. There is significant work to do in the meantime. We must begin the work of learning to truly see with a vision only Christ can offer us.

GUIDANCE

1. Jesus, help me sort out my blindness of _____.
2. If I could spend some time with three people of my past, I would _____.
3. Jesus, you call me again to not be afraid, but yet, _____.
4. Jesus, it is good for me to be here and I _____.
5. When I pray, open my sight to _____.

PRAYER

**Jesus,
Take me away to a place of new vision.
I get stuck in routine.**

**I predict what my friends will say before they say it.
Their footsteps I recognize from afar.
I stack the newspapers the same way every morning.
The calendar spells out my day, interruptions are my defeat.
Put a glow on my world so I may focus on what is important rather than what I manage.
Open my ears to the wisdom-people in my life so I may not live only on my own power. Send advisors, whisper hope, and release me from the fear I stuff underneath my day.**

**I trust the Spirit will breeze through, and the Father will affirm my life, so open my eyes to the unique sight of your love for me.
Amen**

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday February 24, 2008

GOSPEL

John 4:5-42

He had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (The woman) said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true."

The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem

.
You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you." At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?" She left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?" They went out of the town and came to him.

Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper

can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work."

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

THEME

I want to live an authentic life. But everyday I carry inside me the remains of my past. I self-protect my heart when real love is too close. I cringe at the thought of people finding the truth of my life, my history, the life I carved out for myself. This all leaves me thirsting for real relationships, honest community, and genuine communion with God. I learn every day living among people with less, that money, power, and authority can hide my real desire for change, can squelch my quest for honesty, and silence my voice to speak out of behalf of people's needs.

Lent invites me to sit by the wellspring of hope. The Gospels of Lent show me I live in shallow waters, absorbed with my own life, my roots unable to attach to genuine love. Lent is the time to expose our lives in the light of day, to dig a deeper well, to accept the invitation of Jesus to sit and listen to his story to heal our past and to quench our thirst for new life today.

Lent presents to us a daily rhythm of dipping into the well of God. Each day brings a new thirst. Each day gives all of us a different reason to trust in Jesus who sustains our lives in ways we least expect. Today, find your own well, your own way to enjoy God's forgiveness of your past, the true healing that brings joy again, and the hope in you that rouses insight, passion, and a willingness to share your life with others.

GUIDANCE

1. Today, I thirst for _____.
2. Jesus, hear my story, my real life, and _____.
3. Jesus, help me dip into living water and guide me to _____.

4. Forgive me, and _____.
5. Today, I speak out on behalf of _____.

PRAYER

**Jesus,
Everyday I drink from the well of my experience.
I feed on the exhaustion I feel trying to please others.
I drink of the negativity that bubbles up in my soul.
Anger and rage surfaces in my heart and chokes my decisions.
My thinking becomes blurred when I stir my experience and find only me.**

**And then I turn toward the sound of your voice.
You understand my foibles, my insecurities, and my shyness.
Yet, you are there with your hand cupped for me to drink of new life.
You feed me with trust and consolation.**

**Replace my tears with your words of love.
Replenish my parched mouth by giving me a new voice.
Let me hear your invitation which turns my silence into longing.
Spring up life in me, a well of hope for others.**

Amen

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday March 2, 2008

GOSPEL

John 9:1-41

As he passed by he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am." So they said to him, "(So) how were your eyes opened?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see." And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know."

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a Sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath." (But) others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?" His parents answered and said, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for him self." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Messiah, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; question him." So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner." He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" They ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from."

The man answered and said to them, "This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.

Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind." Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.

THEME

I want to be myself. I wish to offer my life to God with a greater honesty and integrity. Instead I settle for the same bashfulness that keeps me blind and insecure. I want to know exactly what I seek in God, but I hardly know myself let alone what God

can accomplish within me. I squirm when I think of praying. I wrestle with myself to be simply the person God has created and chosen, and whom God continues to love.

Lent is the time to bring our desire for an honest life to God. It is the time to stand in the tradition of our ancestors and claim that God's grace is also for us, for each person, for each individual threatened by the poverty of sin and doubt. Lent is the time to let go of the fatal insecurities we hold on to that tells us that we fall in the shadows of the sight lines of God's forgiveness. We are worth God's notice and all of God's divine energy.

Lent calls us out of our dark moments, our bruised pasts, and our fallen egos. Lent puts us on the backs of those who followed the cross before us and paved the way to new life and freedom. We deserve the life God has for us and we can not see our life's potential until our hearts bear the mystery of God's love for us. Christ's love saves us from our destructive selves, from our human messes, from the snags of oppression and denial. We once were blind, now God sees in us new life.

GUIDANCE

1. I want most of all to feel comfortable in the world, but _____.
2. I hide in the darkness of _____.
3. I hold many secrets including _____.
4. Jesus, touch me eyes, help me see that _____.
5. I need your forgiveness for _____.

PRAYER

**Jesus,
My encounters on our street corner reveal my half-opened vision.**

**I walk by a young man with mental illness and I pick up my pace.
I stroll past an elderly woman whose hand is open, my eyes jerk down to the sidewalk.**

The drug dealers great me, I yank my gaze to the other side of the street.

Along this path, I experience my hesitation to view raw life.

These encounters expose my inability to see myself.

I fear facing people most longing for the basics of life.

Deeper, my encounter reveals the sins of my ancestors.

Generations of people have walked by here before me with judgmental eyes.

Touch the blindness that keeps us all apart.

Keep us walking along the same path and bathe us in pools of forgiveness and respect. Open our eyes to gaze beyond the gutters, to a new vision of one another.

Amen

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday, March 9, 2008

GOSPEL

John 11:1-45

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. So the sisters sent word to him, saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said this, and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him." So the disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him."

So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go to die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (But) even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him.

So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed⁷ and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

THEME

I want freedom from the guilt of my past. I know I need to pay the consequences for my actions and recognize my responsibility for my decisions today. So often I feel

bound by my heritage, the choices and decisions which have defined my place in life, the person I am today. I scream out from behind the prison of self-doubt and insecurity. My true voice fades from the lack of respect I give myself and the words that shield me from others.

Lent casts us out of the bondage in which we place ourselves. The season of change enables us to live as followers of the Christ who broke down walls, changed people's perspectives and gave us all a reason to pursue life itself. The process of receiving the grace of the Lenten scriptures casts out fear and helps us to step out of the chaos and doubt that defines our lives, perspectives and relationships.

This is the Lent to release our lives from the wrappings of guilt which smother our life choices and choke our authentic voices. Jesus casts away fear, opens new doors, and heals our past. Grasp the grace that is yours this season. Realize the hope that Christ offers you. Live in the light of change, forgiveness and calm. Jesus unties your fear, unravels your cynicism, and lets us all go in peace.

GUIDANCE

1. Jesus, unravel my guilt so I _____.
2. Call me beyond fear today so _____.
3. Jesus, my true voice speaks today of _____.
4. As I pray this day, I _____.
5. Let me go in peace from my past in order to _____.

PRAYER

**Jesus,
Every morning I turn to you and wait restlessly for your voice.
My regrets stack up like a pile of unread magazines and unopened mail.
A cloud of fear hangs around me like the smell of stale cigarettes.
I feel stuck in the choices I made years ago.
Everything around me says my life is about yesterday.
I sink deep into the morning chill.
Untie my resistance.
Cut the bandages of my self-protection.
Call me out from the tombs I create for myself.
Speak my name, remember me.
I want to live again.**

Amen

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Sunday, March 16, 2008

GOSPEL

Procession before mass: Matthew 21:1-11

Passion Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27

The complete text can be found on our web page, [link to US Bishops](#)

The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" But he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Let him be crucified!"

When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves." And the whole people said in reply, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him.

As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull), they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, (and) come down from the cross!"

Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way. From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli,

lema sabachthani?" Which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him.

Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it (in) clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

The next day, the one following the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that this impostor while still alive said, 'After three days I will be raised up.' Give orders, then, that the grave be secured until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal him and say to the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' This last imposture would be worse than the first. "Pilate said to them, "The guard is yours; go secure it as best you can." So they went and secured the tomb by fixing a seal to the stone and setting the guard.

THEME

Sorrow winds a lonely road. I discover this everyday as I listen to the heroin addict who relapsed and curled in the fetal position for three days. I hear it when I listen to the older man who reminisces about his adult conversion and feels only guilt from his

past. I stand by this sorrow when the frail, crippled woman weeps at her dying husband's bedside. Living our faith means we walk with someone stronger than the power of our tears.

Holy Week leads us on this new journey, the daily stations to the cross and beyond. These days create a time when we can be assured someone is waiting for us to wash our faces with a clean, warm towel. These days teach us that our heavy burdens are meant to be shared, carried on the backs of people who care for us. This Holy Week reveals to us that if we can stand next to suffering our lives will certainly change.

Jesus walked this lonely road before us. Connect your prayer to this journey, wail and lament the chaos of our lives and those we love. Take time sitting in patience to admit your wrongs. Seize the days to quiet your heart so you may hear the fierce condemnation of Christ and feel the cross' hope for us. Together we wait for the dawn at the end of the road, the empty tomb.

GUIDANCE

1. The burden I carry this day is _____.
2. The hope I have comes from _____.
3. I reach out to other's suffering because I _____.
4. I unite my prayer with others in this Holy Week so _____.
5. The living Christ speaks to my life now and I _____.

PRAYER

**Jesus,
Facing change unnerves me.
My fear clamps my stomach and clenches my bite.
My resistance restricts my decisions and tightens my shoulders.
Loosen my apprehension, touch my self-reliance.**

**I walk the path with you.
I listen to the guards accuse you of crime.
I feel the wood and the burden.
I long for you and lean on the stone rolled over your grave.
Your journey promises new life even in my body.**

**I wail at the grave of everything dead in me.
Amen**

At Home Retreat: **Lent 2008** Downtown Chapel Portland, OR Ronald Raab, CSC 19

This retreat is authored by Rev. Ronald Raab, CSC from the Downtown Chapel Roman Catholic Parish, Portland, OR. For more information about the Downtown Chapel, click to our web page: www.downtownchapel.org

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