



The Journey Begins
Lenten Reflections

The Journey Begins...

The season of Lent is a gift of the Church to us. It is a time to expand our knowledge of God and consider our relationship with God. It is also a time to consider our relationship with others through prayer, faith and trust.

Do I believe that Jesus loves me and walks my life with me? What if some of my challenges aren't because I am a helpless victim, but a calling to respond differently to life than I have in the past? Am I being asked to see something that I have been blind to? Is it possible that I could pray differently, understand differently, respond differently? By ourselves it is not. With Jesus at our side we can. And, Jesus is at our side.

Catholic Jail and Prison ministries are about bringing the knowledge of Jesus, the forgiveness and mercy Jesus offers and the hope that life can be changed to people inside. These reflections have been written to help the ministers who need their own faith refreshed, to be a tool to help bring Jesus inside and finally to be a way to find hope for people on the inside and the people who care for them on the outside.

Let the Journey Begin and we pray that all who use this book stay the path until the end and beyond.

Blessed journey,
Parish Social Ministry Staff

These reflections have been written by people involved in jails and prisons in Maine, either on the inside or outside.

This reflection booklet is a product of Parish Social Ministry, Catholic Charities Maine in collaboration with Maine Prisoners Reentry Network, Maine Correctional Center Catholic Ministry and St. Thérèse of Lisieux Jail Ministry



Ash Wednesday

Joel 2: 12-18

2 Corinthians 5: 20-6: 2

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

"Today the journey begins! We will come to know Jesus, and through His sacrifice, the limitless Love our Father makes available to us all! This is Lent, where we focus on strengthening our relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ."

Androscoggin Jail Ministry opening for Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday in jail, with groups of 24 men, from various faiths and faith traditions, is the best way to begin the season of lent. Apprehension, excitement, and curiosity fill the room as our jail ministry team explains how each day and week, of lent, will help us to understand who Jesus was, and is in our lives. How Lent is more than giving up sweets. Lent is a deepening of our love for God the Father and the loving sacrifice of His son. Unless you have celebrated Lent with residents of a jail or prison, it's hard to describe. For me though, worshipping our Lord Jesus with men in jail, is the place where I feel the closest to God and closest to understanding His gift of unconditional love.

Bruce Noddin

*Prince of Peace Jail Ministry to Androscoggin County Jail and
Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network's Executive Director*

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Luke 9: 22-25

We are all, you and I, born as gifts from God to our parents. As I grew up, I learned by following the basic commandment to love one another as yourself because the opposite of love is hate and hate destroys everything. Focusing on hate, instead of to respect and tolerate others, will only keep you and the people around you from loving God.

Even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob didn't have Jesus in their lives, as He had not yet arrived, their strong belief in God still had a powerful impact on how they all lived their lives.

May you know that God's love for you is real and he's waiting to hear that from you so He may help you to become the person you were meant to be — a child of God!

Joseph Garand is a father of three, grandfather of two, a communicant of St. Thérèse of Lisieux Parish in Sanford, ME, and actively gives of his time as he can in different ministries

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58: 1-9a
Matthew 9: 14-15

Fasting for Community Welfare (A real life application)

Since the emergence of coronavirus, we have been challenged to safeguard our own communities. News headlines read daily how the virus seems uncontrollable, unemployment claims are at unprecedented levels, and calls are announced for community control and lockdown. To many of us, these proclamations and executive orders may feel far too controlling. Thankfully, Jesus provided us with the model for embracing really tough times as he fasted for forty days. Fasting is not intended to be easy as even Jesus admitted that, “he was starving.” (Matthew 4:1-11) — but also added that fasting should be approached with a joyous heart. (Matthew 9:14-15). Considering the very teachings in Isaiah 58:7, we would prove wise to remember our call to provide for the poor and do our best to help the oppressed — making them the object of our fasting. We can then rest well knowing that God will be pleased. (Is 58:8-14)

Randall Liberty

Commissioner, State of Maine Department of Corrections

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58: 9b-14

Luke 5: 27-32

None of us know the hearts of others. We can't know the burdens they may be carrying. They may be weighed down with guilt because they don't know the freedom of salvation we have been blessed to know.

We are told to lift each other's burdens and pour ourselves out for each other. If we stop pointing fingers, we are promised the Lord will guide us. We can become springs of water to refresh those around us and satisfy our souls.

Jesus wasn't ashamed to eat with sinners. He said He came to call sinners to repentance. He healed physical illnesses and inner turmoil. He lives in us so that we can show His love to those who need Him. And isn't that all of us?

Marnie Roy

Rose's Room, Lewiston

First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9: 8-17

1 Peter 3: 18-23

Mark 1: 9-15

"This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations.

I set my bow in the clouds..." (Genesis 9:12)

Life is interconnected. Science continues to uncover these connections. Trees message and help one another in an underground network. Honeybees are dying because of chemicals used in fertilizers.

Sometimes we may wish critters like mosquitoes away. We need to learn how the web of life works, use natural means to tackle problems, see the big picture.

God made his agreement with Noah, all future peoples and all of nature forever!

How do you act toward all life forms in your neighborhood? Do you need to learn how the natural world interacts around you and is affected by your choices?

How do you recognize and help God's Kingdom to grow where you are? How is God calling you to change?

Sr. Jackie Moreau

Saturday Communion Service Leader, Windham Prison

Monday of the 1st Week of Lent

Daniel 9: 4b-10

Luke 6: 36-38

Chair of St. Peter

In the Gospel of Matthew, we see Jesus tell Peter that he will build his church on Peter. I don't think Peter understood what Jesus meant. Peter did know it was something very profound. When Jesus asked him who Peter thought he was, he said he was the Messiah, and even more astounding, he knew Jesus was Divine, the Son of God. Jesus was clear Peter didn't figure it out. The Father had revealed it to him. So often people don't get some spiritual truth. Often, they can't figure it out either. They need a revelation. It will only be revealed to them in seeking the truth and in prayer. In our first reading we see a transformed Peter who has assumed his role as head of the church.

Mike Kennedy

Tuesday of the 1st Week of Lent

Isaiah 55: 10-11

Matthew 6: 7-15

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater (Is 55:10)

During a difficult time in my life, a friend asked me to help his girlfriend who was in trouble. Reluctantly I agreed and was irritated when finding out she was an inmate at the county jail. Our first visit began to bring back life into me, as the prophet Isaiah reflects, "...watering the earth...making it bud." Helping her during her incarcerated year was budding a seed in my walk with God. In between our weekly visits, she would decorate each correspondence with her beautiful artwork. Seeing the kindness in her creativity would bring a much-needed smile to my face. My prayers for help came in the form of helping someone else. The seed of those visits yielded compassion in my heart to sow into God's purpose. The bread for the eater today is faith and trust in God, His word nourishes us in joyful and challenging times.

Blanca Lytle

MA Spiritual Director, Prison Ministry Volunteer

Wednesday of the 1st Week of Lent

Jonah 3: 1-10
Luke 11: 29-32

*"Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites,
so will the Son of Man be to this generation." (Lk:11:30)*

Our world abounds with signs. They direct us, inform us, warn us, invite us, welcome us. Jesus is the Sign of God! A teacher of truth. A prophet of hope. A pioneer of acceptance. A dispenser of forgiveness. A celebrant of good will toward all. During this Lenten season may we look for signs of his presence among us: within the people we meet and in the places we visit. May we strive to become more humble, more kind, more accepting, more loving, more full of God.

Fr. Dan Baillargeon
Prayer Partner

Thursday of the 1st Week of Lent

Ester C: 12,14-16, 23-25

Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus said what Matthew wrote: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you."

It's a shame that the vain Hamas, chief counselor to the Persian Empire King Ahasuerus, preceded Jesus by 500+ years and didn't hear this advice. If he had, he would not have convinced the king to kill Malachi and all the other 75,000 Jews in the empire.

It's a good thing Malachi's stepdaughter was Queen Esther, and a Jew.

It was through her fervent prayer that the queen sought help, guidance, and direction from God. Her prayers were answered. With His guidance and direction, she was able to convince the king to countermand the order and execute Hamas and his henchmen instead.

The result was the Jewish community was elevated in stature and prospered emotionally and spiritually.

The extraordinary power of prayer.

Bob Carr, MPRN-York County Chapter

Friday of the 1st Week of Lent

Ezekiel 18: 21-28

Matthew 5: 20-26

"...go at once and make peace with your brother..." (Mt 5:24)

I was estranged from my brother for over 20 years. The reason why seemed less and less important, almost forgotten, with each passing year. But I missed him, and the ache in my heart was becoming harder to bear. One Sunday at Mass, I was overwhelmed with the need to see him. "It's in your hands, God!" I drove to his home and rang the doorbell. He opened the door, and said, "Come on in." Those first few visits were awkward but became less so. The first time we hugged when saying good-bye felt...strange. The next time we hugged and said good-bye, I said, "I love you, and I missed you." "Me, too," said my brother. With whom do you need to make peace?

Anonymous

Saturday of the 1st Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 26: 16-19

Matthew 5: 43-48

“You have heard it said: ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” Who, exactly, is my neighbor? What makes someone my enemy? Regardless of my answers, the questions confirm the “us vs. them” dynamic set forth in the opening command.

“But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” Jesus reminds us that the labels — neighbor, enemy — are irrelevant, as are my answers. Our heavenly Father makes the sun rise and the rain fall on everyone, regardless of whether I consider them friends or enemies.

God’s ways are not our ways, and we — who not perfect — are called to be like Him, who is perfectly merciful. Praying for our enemies, our persecutors, is one sure way to turn “them” into “us.” Only then will we begin to erase our divisions and truly live as children of our heavenly Father.

Janet Brackett

St. Joseph’s (Farmington) Parish Social Ministry/Jail Ministry

Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Romans 8: 31b-34

Mark 9: 2-10

God tested Abraham. Sometimes for me it is easy to have faith when all is going well. The test is to stay obedient even when I go through hard times and to show my unconditional love by way of doing God's work here on earth. I had a similar experience while I was in the isolation unit at the state prison. I will spare the graphic details, but my sacrifice was as Isaac's. My faithful God saved me that evening. This incident may have been due to the long term of isolation, however I believed I was called to show my faith.

For he chose to spare me and accept me into his house. I also know, now, that Jesus is the sacrifice for all of man's sin and because of that I am no longer obligated to punish myself for the guilt I feel. I am forgiven and to keep hurting myself is an act of not accepting God's gift to me.

*John M.
Resident at Mt. View Correctional Facility
Charleston, Maine*

Monday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Daniel 9: 4b-10

Luke 6: 36-38

Have you ever had a hard time in your life showing mercy and forgiveness towards someone who has done you an injustice or wrong? It is a difficult thing for us to do. Jesus in today's gospel, talks about the importance of giving mercy. Christ said to His disciples "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. Forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you."

Recently I read in a news report about an extraordinary demonstration of mercy. Two young men one night decided to go out for a drive. An accident occurred. The driver's friend passenger died in the crash. The person operating the vehicle was charged by authorities.

Before the trial started something extraordinary took place. The parents, who had lost their beloved son asked themselves what their caring son, would have wanted to see done. The answer to their question, lead them to a decision to ask for mercy in the case. Jesus in Luke 6 states, "the measure you give will be the measure you get back." The family found some solace in their seeking mercy as they felt that their son would have sought.

Deacon John McAuliffe

Chaplain, Longcreek Youth Development Center

Tuesday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Isaiah 1: 10, 16-20

Matthew 23: 1-12

*“Wash, make yourself clean. Take your wrong doing out of my sight.
Cease doing evil.” (Isaiah 1:16)*

In our darkest and most overwhelming moments, God gives us hope by encouraging us to simply do the next right thing. No matter how deep the hole is that we have dug ourselves into, God invites us to drop the shovel and start climbing out.

For some seeking a transformative life, their first experience with “GOD” might be as an action to start practicing: Good Orderly Direction.

We may be powerless over our past, other people and many other things, but we can still feel the comfort of a loving God every day that we seek positive change in our life.

God, please give me the strength today to stay on your path.

Anonymous

Wednesday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Jeremiah 18: 18-20

Matthew 20: 17-28

The mother of Zebedee's sons was a witness to the crucifixion. I imagine her remembering the conversation that Jesus had with her sons and that it filled her with fear to think of her sons "drinking from the same cup." Parents dream of success for their children and want with all their hearts to protect them from suffering. But Jesus understood that the only way to resurrection and new life was **through** suffering. In Rose's Room parents and others with loved ones who are incarcerated, find support to help them walk that path of shared suffering that hopefully will lead in time to a new chance and a new life with God's help. That new life will bring the opportunity to serve others who are trying to find **their** path. That kind of service is what greatness looks like in God's Realm.

Pastor Dodie Sheffield

United Methodist

Thursday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Jeremiah 17: 5-10

Luke 16: 19-31

*“Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings; who makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.”
(Luke 17:5)*

The nature of God’s love never falters; it is our sight that falters. We are plagued by temptation. As a human being, we often seek strength and nourishment from that which is human. Yet, as a human being we are also spiritual beings, connected, loved, and nourished by God. A path is laid before our feet and we must rely on the innate love in our hearts to steer the course.

With temptation so great to cause the bonds within the heart to grow thick and break, a humble path in seeking God’s love through our human eyes is the purpose of our being. Faith and dedication seem, to me, to be the only method against such a storm. Bringing the love of God into every moment helps me weather the storm; my heart is the tiller; God is my ship.

John O.

Incarcerated at Maine State Prison

Friday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Genesis 37: 3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a

Matthew 21: 33-43, 45-46

Today's readings speak of restorative justice. Joseph's brothers are motivated by murderous jealousy, greed, treachery, deceit. Reuben, it seems, is in with the wrong crowd. Unwilling to go along with the planned murder, he lacks the courage to stand up to his brothers. Imagine the deep remorse he feels as his father, Israel, mourns what he believes is his youngest son's death, but Reuben is trapped in the conspiracy. Later, the brothers again encounter Joseph, now top advisor to Egypt's king. Rather than exacting revenge, Joseph forgives, restoring the family — the family which will become the Chosen People, from which our Savior will arise. Jesus' parable of the servants killed by the tenants of the vineyard parallels the history of the prophets and prefigures Jesus' own death on the cross. But Jesus forgives, restoring the relationship between God and humanity. Who has wronged me, and what might happen if I forgive?

Deacon Frank Daggett

Coordinator of Catholic Ministry at Maine Correctional Center in Windham

Saturday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Micah 7: 14-15, 18-20

Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

"Was Lost and Has Been Found"

(Luke 15: 32)

This Gospel reference captures the essence of kindness, compassion, change, hope and forgiveness.

I invite you to embrace a piece of sea glass. Imagine it was once a part of a whole...perhaps a vase or a rare bottle of wine. I wonder what this piece of sea glass once was. I wonder what it has endured over time. I wonder what elements of nature it experienced to help shape its broken state into a state of beauty. I can imagine time nurtured its rough edges to soft edges of resilience.

Sea glass is a piece of art that was once whole and has transformed from a place of brokenness to a new identity of beauty. The incremental transformation brings with it celebration, joy, excitement and is held with compassion and love.

God's grace and sacred gifts of healing pave the way for goodness filled with mercy. Like the piece of sea glass, once broken, **lost and now found**, we too can heal from our wounds and be celebrated with God's compassion and love.

*Kelly Dell'Aquila
My Sister's Keeper
Volunteer Consultant*

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20:1-7
1 Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

My time with the Lord became special when I was incarcerated. Never before had I relied on Him as my primary support mechanism. Never before had I read from scripture and truly pondered what he meant, as for the first time there was an author speaking to me. I would reread a line, listening to what he had to say. If I didn't understand or had a question, he would speak to me again. He had finally become the narrator.

Learning how to be Obedient to God is a gift that I received through my time inside. Just like the Jewish slaves that were freed from Egypt, the Lord freed me from the bondage of my life's evil ways. The commandments are instructions for life but also become an obligation and standard to live by. We learn the joy of being obedient through service and following his guide to live by.

The rewards of obedience are sound. The promise of eternal love and life in his forgiving arms.

Sean Crothers

Monday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Second Kings 5: 1-15b

Luke 4: 24-30

Jesus evangelizes to Jews and Gentiles alike. Imagine the outrage when this son of a local carpenter reminds them their beloved God of Abraham had previously sent Prophets Elijah and Elisha to minister to the foreign widow and heal the foreign leper — but not their own!

They didn't want to hear that their God loves everyone —

And that's what we are called to share.

This was rejected in the beginning- Jesus was almost run off a cliff — and it is still rejected today — and yet Christianity still needs people like the 12 Jesus chose in the beginning.

Clint Daggett

I'm 85 and I've been blessed for 40+ years as a Christian volunteer in local jails.

Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Daniel 3: 25, 34-43

Matthew 18: 21-35

Reading 1 (Dn 3:25, 34-43) Azariah stood up in the FIRE and prayed aloud.

Many have knowledge of God but no longer pray or follow his commandments and no longer fear him or love him with their whole heart. Let us not forget his ways of mercy, TRUTH, compassion, kindness and teach it to our children.

Gospel (Mt 18:21-35) Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him?"

If we are faithful to God we will obey the greatest commandment of all that Jesus gave us and that is "Love God with your whole heart, mind, strength and soul and love your neighbor as yourself." So we who love ourselves have to ask ourselves this question, "If we were found guilty of the same crime do we want to be forgiven?"

Donna Flannagan

Rose's Room, York County and Board of Visitors, York County Jail

Wednesday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9

Matthew 5: 17-19

The book of Deuteronomy is the fifth book of Moses and emphasizes the importance of teaching the children about God's commandments, statutes, ordinances and rules they must follow during their entire life. As God says, "listen and pay attention to what I teach you and Do Them"! Few children attended Mass or church of any type throughout the ages. Even in normal times, prior to Covid-19, us elderly recall the few kiddies, that were there, "going downstairs" for their special teaching. Today's reading emphasizes the critical importance of parents and families teaching their children about God's rules they must follow throughout their lives in order to spend eternity in Heaven with God and their deceased loved ones. In the early times there was no catechism or Sunday school dedicated to introducing or teaching the little ones about God. Their Godly education consisted of the verbal communication and conduct of their elders passed on throughout a multitude of generations. Most important were/are the actions of them/their teachers, not their words. The same is true today especially in the midst of this Covid-19 pandemic. The children's classroom education, at any level, about any subject, is nearly at an end for now. A superb academic education will not secure a place for any of us with God in Heaven. However, a true, heartfelt understanding of God's commandments, statutes, ordinances and rules, accompanied by our sincere attempt to follow them and teach our children and others to follow them too, will surely be pleasing to the Lord.

Emerson Lee Noddin

Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Program (MPRN) Board Member

Thursday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Jeremiah 7: 23-28

Luke 11: 14-23

*"...but if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons,
then the Kingdom of God has come upon you."*

If only I could drive out demons with my finger....

Can you?

Do you believe that God can?

I know that God can. I know the demons (all too well) that can haunt and control, many times for years. I thought that was who I was — not possible of redemption, not possible of relationship, not good enough for joy.

With eyes on the Cross, over time Jesus revealed a merciful God who loves me and believes I am good enough. I am capable of love — of loving God, others and myself. My response is to believe in the God who believes in me.

Susan McGaulley

Parish Social Ministry, Catholic Charities Maine

Friday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Hosea 14: 2-10

Mark 12: 28-34

Loving our Lord God unconditionally is the First and most essential Commandment. If we do not love our Lord God, we cannot seek forgiveness, nor are we able to love our neighbor as ourselves. In John 15:10, the Lord tell us, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love."

In order to live a meaningful and purposeful life of obedience and humility, we must love our Lord first. Living life in a selfishness with self-gratification and selfish fulfillment is disobedient to our First Commandment. We can do all things when God is first in our live. Living life in the manner our Lord has ordained is true love and devotion.

Foster O.

Incarcerated at Maine State Prison, NAACP President

Saturday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Hosea 6: 1-6

Luke 18: 9-14

“He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence.” (Hosea 6:2)*

Hosea’s word ‘revive’ is rich in defining what God does and yet the First Reading reveals that He at times tears His people apart. Yes, He shakes us up! Does not Jesus invite us to be “perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:28). Our God understands our struggles and times of darkness, as Jesus does through His suffering and death. Jesus Himself, through His action at the Cross, had to trust that His Father would raise Him from the dead! God promises us that He will always revive us. In times that we may feel empty of the ordinary comforts of life, Christ meets us in those empty places and promises His blessings will return.

Fr. Bob Vaillancourt, Pastor, St. Brendan the Navigator, Mid-Coast, Maine, and Catholic Priest Chaplain at Maine State Prison

Fourth Sunday of Lent

2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23

Ephesians 2: 4-10

John 3: 14-21

Most of us can probably admit how pain has helped to shape us into the person we are today. Society provides many ways of masking personal pain which often leads to more pain and suffering.

In the first reading today, Our Lord, in His infinite compassion, sent many messengers to all the nations because of the abominations being practiced and the disrespect being shown to the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. Why couldn't they accept and listen to those messengers? It certainly would have alleviated the pain and destruction that was to come upon them all.

This Lenten Season is a time for all of us to look at our lives and see how Our Lord is trying to reach us. What is causing us pain? What if we believed in the power of our faith? Is masking that pain the solution? If not, then what is? Ah... The Light!

David Vanasse

Volunteer at York County Jail

Monday of the 4th Week of Lent

Isaiah 65: 17-21

John 4: 43-54

Healing

As Lent approaches each year we consider what we'll "give up" for that penitential season. What if we asked ourselves, "How does Jesus want me to spend this time?"

The year was 2012. I desired to let Jesus provide the occasions for sacrifice and made myself open to His will. The diagnosis of pancreatic cancer came as a huge surprise. When the shock wore off, I placed myself in God's hands for all that would follow...chemo, radiation, nausea, and ultimately surgery.

In today's Gospel a royal official begged Jesus to heal his son who was at the point of death. Jesus granted his request. During my cancer journey I also begged Jesus for healing. I came to understand that even if I was not healed physically, I was being healed spiritually.

I've learned to let Jesus lead the way during Lent. Will you allow Him to lead you?

Barbara Borque

Tuesday of the 4th Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12

John 5: 1-16

Reflection EZ 47: 1-9, 12

The water flowing from the sanctuary symbolizes the life God offers to those who choose to take up our daily crosses and follow him. God the Father is the source of our spiritual and physical life. Staying in relationship with the Holy Trinity through daily prayer, meditation & receiving his precious body and blood keeps us connected to the spiritual life that flows out from God the Father, Jesus his Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus teaches that apart from me you can do nothing, by following our own human nature and desires we are led to a life of sin which leads us to a spiritual death. By staying in relationship with the loving God our Father we become more like him, holy and pure, loving others unconditionally. This has a ripple effect — effecting all our relationships and interactions with everyone in the world.

Reflection John 5: 1-6

Jesus encounters the lame man who was stricken for 38 years unable to walk or help himself, or so he thought. Jesus asks him a simple question, “Do you want to be well?” He has been living apart from God’s grace represented by the pools of healing water. He struggles to find that grace and a life free from sin, hindered by his lack of Faith and relying on his own strength. A strong belief and a livelier faith are all that is needed to find healing, but not by his own strength can this be accomplished. He needs to put his faith & trust in Jesus. Jesus gives him that confidence to stand up and walk, healed from his infirmities. Jesus admonishes him to sin no more and stay faithful to God so he can continue to live victorious and live an abundant life.

Leo Tetrault

Kairos Team Member

Wednesday of the 4th Week of Lent

Isaiah 49: 8-15

John 5: 17-30

If we accept that Jesus is more than a prophet or “good guy,” we must ask ourselves “so then what?” How does this truth affect our life? Accepting this passage demands a greater and deeper understanding Gods’ plan of salvation for each one of us. Because Jesus was given the authority of God the Father, shall we live like the repentant thief next to Jesus on the cross? Understand the Son, to be in an eternity with God the Father.

Steve Veit

Thursday of the 4th Week of Lent

Exodus 32: 7-14

John 5: 31-47

"But you do not want to come to me to have life"

In the reading from John, Jesus understands that the Jewish leaders do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God. Jesus calls out a truth that if they had been believing in Moses, then they would know the signs and believe that Jesus was sent by God.

The leaders did not want life to be through someone who taught understanding, mercy, forgiveness, equality, service. Neither do we sometimes. It is a lot more fun and satisfying to want revenge, disunity, and blind justice. It feels more powerful.

Jesus or misguided power? That is our human choice. Lent is the time to recognize which choice we are making every day and to ask for God's forgiveness and the courage to make the choice that leads to life for all more and more often.

Anonymous

Friday of the 4th Week of Lent

Second Samuel 7: 4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Romans 4: 13, 16-18, 22

Matthew 1: 16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2: 41-51a

All these verses speak of faith. Joseph and the Wisemen had faith Mary's pregnancy was a miracle (Mt 1:18, 18-21). David was asked to build a temple, and he did so faithfully, with gratitude (2 Sm 7:4-5, 12-14), and Abraham became the heir of the world through faith (Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22). Similarly, I have faith you see me as more than the worst choice I have ever made. I pray men and women of faith see / god as non-condemning, non-judging, and as a non-punishing God who would never lock any life form in a cell.

I have faith one day the power of the Church, understanding the compassion of God, and the power love, will work to return parole in Maine and support positive re-entry. I have faith you will welcome me home and back into the Church. Why wait? Faith without works is dead. God is loving forgiving, and kind. What does your faith support? Healing or punishing?

Steven Matthew C.

Incarcerated Citizen, Graduate Student, and Man of Faith

Saturday of the 4th Week of Lent

Jeremiah 11: 18-20

John 7: 40-53

As we read in Jeremiah and John's Gospel, it's the same story.

As we continue our spiritual journey through this life, I find I must focus on the inside rather than the outside. I know this God of Mercy and Justice calls us to search our minds and hearts for our own evil plots, not to look at those of others, but the one that exists in me. We are believers who were born blind. Do we Radiate Christ's Light? If we have this, nothing else is needed. The people believed about Jeremiah's word but thought of him as a pest, they wanted nothing to do with his warnings. We really have to simplify his words and get back to the basics. Our culture has become a Godless one. Take time to consider what the culture offers rather than what God has to offer. He gives us the greatest message; we must spread that message that He has put in our hearts. Do I do that? When Jesus speaks can we feel His loving presence?

Deacon Jim Burns

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Hebrews 5: 7-9

John 12: 20-33

We don't have to look far to see that challenges referenced in today's readings, the Jews exiled in Babylon and the violent persecution of Jesus and his disciples are a variation of the challenges of our time. The worldwide pandemic, racial unrest due to inequality and economic instability have unearthed divisions in us that have fueled anger, fear and hatred. How can we draw strength from today's readings so as to continue to our journey on Earth without becoming fearful, distrusting and bitter? There are messages of hope and consolation and spiritual renewal embedded in today's reading.

Through Jeremiah, our Lord offers us a hopeful path forward with a new covenant in which mercy is extended to all. As children of God we are asked to extend that unconditional mercy to our brothers/sisters in the form of forgiveness. Repeatedly, because we are all sinners. Mercy is needed more than ever during these unprecedented times.

In Hebrews 5:7-9 the message is that our Lord "learned from obedience from what he had suffered." My takeaway from this text is that submitting to the will of God (obedience) frees us from the stress of assuming we have to control our surroundings in this life on Earth. Let His will be done, not ours.

John's text gives us Jesus' words "the man who loves his life loses it, while the man who hates his life in this work preserves it to the life eternal." (John 12:25). Earthly things will pass. Jesus is eternal. Put your faith in Jesus.

Despite changes in the earthly world, the truth about our God remains unchanged. In the midst of untruth, Truth (the Word) persists.

Monique Gautreau

Penobscot County Jail Ministry

Monday of the 5th Week of Lent

Daniel 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13: 41c-62

John 8: 1-11

The adulterous woman did not deny the accusation leveled against her; she owned it. Her accusers did not own their part. If the woman was caught in the very act, then they must know who the man is. Why didn't they bring him forward? They did it to try and find something to accuse Jesus with. Jesus is very aware of their sins. He wrote them in the sand. This is why they all walked away from Him: "The darkness hates the light." They should have stuck around and confessed like the repentant thief that was dying on the cross alongside of Jesus, stating: we receive justly the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done no wrong. Jesus states, "this day you will be with me in paradise." Jesus is also very aware of our sins. Confession gets you into paradise.

Norm Girard, OFS

Tuesday of the 5th Week of Lent

Numbers 21: 4-9

John 8: 21-30

Moses prayed for the people who sinned against God and God told Moses to make a snake, get it up on a pole so anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. In John, Jesus told the people he is going away and when they lift up the Son of Man, they will know he is the one he claims to be. Jesus was crucified and died for our sins. This was over 2,000 years ago and to this day anyone can find an image of Jesus on a cross. Just as a bronze snake on a pole saved people, so does the image of Jesus hanging on a cross, even if it's only your mind.

Greg W.

Incarcerated at Maine State Prison

Wednesday of the 5th Week of Lent

Daniel 3: 14-20, 91-92, 95

John 8: 31-42

Imagine that within seconds you may be thrown into a hot furnace. You need to make a decision and ask yourself some questions: How strong is my faith? Have I made an effort to learn my faith? Do I know spiritual music that will touch my soul and strengthen me? Did God create me to care for and love me or did he create me and then walk away? How much do I love and trust God?

These are questions Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had to ask themselves. Although they must have been fearful, they remained firm and confident enough that it made a great impression on the king.

After entering the fire, think of the realization that they were not only void of pain, but they were aware of a presence of love. A presence to console, lead and protect them all.

God, please help strengthen my faith. Amen!

Mary Gannaway

St. Thérèse of Lisieux Parish, York County

Thursday of the 5th Week of Lent

Isaiah 7: 10-14; 8: 10

Hebrews 10: 4-10

Luke 1: 26-38

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. We commemorate the moment Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce the plan of salvation God intended to bring forth. It seems odd to celebrate the Annunciation during Lent. March 25th is exactly 9 months from December 25th, but that is not the significance for me. The Annunciation emphasizes how the Incarnation of God is brought into the realm of human history. Mary agreed to submit herself entirely to God's will. God wants me to love Him, and such love requires an act on my part to freely choose him while, at the same time, rejecting something else — sin, worldly pleasures, etc. And that is the connection for to the Lenten Season. The Annunciation reminds me that I have the gift of freedom to choose God and reject the things that keep me away from Him. Like Mary, we can respond to God's invitation with our own Fiat: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy Word."

Anonymous

Friday of the 5th Week of Lent

Jeremiah 20: 10-13

John 10: 31-42

In 10:31-42, Verse 31 begins by saying that we know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does His will, He listens to him. I attest to this. I always believed in God. My intentions at the time were to ask for help only when I was in trouble. As time went on, God never gave up on me. He wanted me to see through my wrong decisions and he provided me true meaning in my life — what his intention for me on this earth is. Verse 33 states, that it is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. I was born blind to whom God truly is and was shown to see who he is! God helps me every day to walk in his path. The emotions expressed in me are from God.

Jeff T.

Incarcerated at Maine State Prison

Saturday of the 5th Week of Lent

Ezekiel 37: 21-28

John 11: 45-56

Sovereign Lord says, "I am going to take the stick of Joseph...join it with other sticks...and make them into one (bundle) in my hand." A single stick can more easily be broken, whereas a "bundle of sticks" together cannot. Self-reliant individuals can more easily be broken, whereas a communal (tribal) relationship of individuals working together cannot. "Where two or more are gathered in my name... I will be among them." I reckon that Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament and giving some practical instruction about group conscience in community dealings. Essentially, our Lord is saying, "Follow these steps together, and leave the consequences to the Sovereign Lord." Further, I take this to mean that right relationships, united in purpose and pious petition, are stronger together when God is present.

Dale Gilmour

Passion Sunday

(PALM SUNDAY)

Mark 11: 1-10 or John 12: 12-16 or Isaiah 50: 4-7

Philippians 2: 6-11

Mark 14: 1 - 15: 47

The Anointing at Bethany (Mark 14 1-11)

When the woman at Simon's house anoints the head of Jesus, she is chastised by the disciples for wasting the ointment which they believe should be sold and given to the poor. When I read Jesus' rebuke of His disciples, I wonder if He's also putting us on notice that, sometimes, even our good intentions might not fit with His plan. Should they have asked Him whether or not the woman was fulfilling His wishes, rather than assuming that they knew what He would want from her?

I can ask the same about myself. How often do I misinterpret the "beautiful thing" done by others because I believe that I know better? Worse yet, do I miss the opportunity to glorify Him because I have my own ideas of what should be done? Am I, sometimes, a little too quick to assume what He expects of me? I certainly hope not.

Patrick D.

Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42: 1-7

John 12: 1-11

Is 42:1-7 — This passage is telling about how Jesus, full of the Spirit, has come to minister to the people, to be compassionate to all, to bring God's believers to be saved and to walk according to God's will. To bring all nations together and someday be judged. Jesus is bringing the promise to Israel to free all believers from the life of sin. This is according to the will of God.

Jn 12:1-11 — This passage tells the love of Mary, Lazarus sister, had for our Savior, Jesus. After raising Lazarus from the dead, they prepared a supper for him. Mary using very expensive perfume to wash the feet of Jesus. Judas who is upset with this act voices his opinion, but Jesus interrupted his complaining by saying what she did was a good thing. Mary truly believes and loves the Savior. Also, Judas has lost out on a profit for himself in the pouring out of the expensive perfume. He, being criticized, sold Jesus out to the chief priests. And they all wanted to put Lazarus to death again. Mary was preparing Jesus for his crucifixion.

Phyllis W.

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49: 1-6

John 13: 21-33, 36-38

Jesus was deeply troubled. He said "one of you will betray me."

We are called to bring back God's people back to Him, the ones who have gone astray. The ones who have lost hope, and forgiveness. God uses us as ambassadors of His Love and mercy, for all mankind.

Hear me. O Coastlands, listen, O distant people, He made me a sharp-edged sword.

I will make you a light to the world!

Though I thought I had toiled in vain, and for nothing, uselessly spent my strength.

My God is now my strength, my reward is with the Lord.

Love one another as I have loved you. By this they will know that you are my disciples.

Lucille LaChance

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Matthew 26: 14-25

I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to the sons of my mother. (Psalm 69:9)

Incarceration is a lonely place. We are away from those we love. As Fr. Jim Nadeau of Christ the King parish points out, it is a chasm that even God does not fill. Fr. Nadeau uses this quote from theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was awaiting execution by the Nazis, to illustrate his point. "Nothing can fill the gap when we are away from those we love. We must simply hold out and win through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation, since leaving the gap unfilled preserves the bonds between us. God does not fill it but keeps it empty so that our communion with one another may be kept alive, even at the cost of pain." Indeed, loneliness is a bitter pill to swallow, but our loving God always gives us what we need, not necessarily what we want.

God, in my loneliness and brokenness I trust that you are preparing my heart to be reunited with those I love.

Bill Wood/Fr. Jim Nadeau

Holy Thursday

Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14:1

1st Corinthians 11: 23-26

John 13: 1-15 (Passover, Eucharist)

Fool's Day

We are called by belief in Jesus to be holy fools. In this age being counter-cultural is essential. The mystery of the Eucharist and other Church teachings challenge our minds. As holy fools we are meant to live spiritual mysteries, not understand them. Our redemption is not meant to be pursued but for us to surrender to our salvation. On this day of fools, we can all proclaim our faith, hope and love for something bigger than ourselves.

During this Lent, we consider our life and pray to our God for a better world and holier existence to share with others. The readings today encourage our belief and participation in the Eucharist and in salvation. We approach Passover with anticipation. Let us not succumb to being worldly fools!

*Sr. Courtney Haase, CoC
Companions of Clare
Franciscan Beguine
Skowhegan, ME*

Good Friday

Isaiah 52: 13; 53: 12
Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9
John 18: 1; 19: 42

"I assure you, today you will be with Me in paradise." These words from Jesus to the good thief are the clearest example of the power in Jesus' mercy and salvation. This message of Jesus' boundless forgiveness was always difficult to comprehend, until I had to carry my own cross. In that time of pain, sin, and sadness, where I even hoped for my own death, Jesus came to me and showered His limitless love and forgiveness upon me. He saved my life!

Through this period of suffering, Jesus showed me just what unconditional love is. The Lord's grace and forgiveness, which I never earned, must be shared with the people I meet every day, especially with those I determined were my enemies. Too difficult! How can I do this Lord? Well, He taught me to pray for my so-called enemies, and to forgive them in my heart. Now there are no more enemies in my life, thanks to Jesus and His promise on the cross.

Bruce Noddin

Executive Director (MPRN) Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network

Holy Saturday

Genesis 1: 1
Genesis 22: 1-2

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD swept the sea with a strong east wind throughout the night and so turned it into dry land. When the water was thus divided, the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land, with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.” (Exodus 14:21-22)

We are all familiar with that iconic Hollywood movie scene where Charlton Heston, as a bearded Moses standing high on a rocky ledge, parts the Red Sea.

What a miracle! What an escape for the Israelites!

For those of us involved in prison ministry, we are privileged to see similar miracles and personal escapes from self-inflicted bondage on a regular basis in our work with those who are incarcerated.

For those men and women who find a new strength and serenity in the belief of a loving God, it has been one heck of a “chariot ride” from the personal destruction of the past out into the bright sunshine of a hope-filled future!

These men and women who have so profoundly transformed their personal lives through a new found faith in God, are indeed his walking miracles!

God, please sustain my belief in your daily miracles!

Anonymous

Easter Sunday

Acts 10: 34a, 37-43

Colossians 3: 1-4 or First Corinthians 5: 6b-8

John 20: 1-9 or Mark 16: 1-7

In the book of Acts Chapter 10, Peter for the first time is bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gentile.

If Jesus were on earth today, would we find him in the jails and prisons, talking to those who are incarcerated? Of Course, we would. He would be there "to seek and save the lost."

Through Peter's speech, we learn how God shows no partiality. The Book of Acts Chapter 10 verse 34 (KJV) says "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." He is completely unbiased in His love towards each human soul whom is made in His image. However, although He is completely unbiased, He is completely just and therefore having to judge sin. We are saved by grace of God, not by goodness or good works. That's what makes, the glorious gospel so amazing.

Troy Morton

Sheriff Penobscot County



Our Father

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy Will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Act of Contrition

O my God,
I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee,
and I detest all my sins,
because I dread the loss of heaven,
and the pains of hell;
but most of all because
they offend Thee, my God,
Who are all good and deserving
of all my love.
I firmly resolve,
with the help of Thy grace,
to confess my sins, to do penance,
and to amend my life.

Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of our death.

Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father,

And to the Son,

And to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now,

And ever shall be,

World without end.

Amen.









ccmaine.org | psm@ccmaine.org | 207.523.1161

portlanddiocese.org/ministries/prison-ministry



Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network

re-entriemaine.org