

Lent 2026

Dear Parishioners:

In the spring of 2024, Fr. Taryn, Fr. Daniel, and I began working on a reflection booklet for the season of Advent in 2024. The inspiration came from Christy Trantina who suggested we could do one for the parish rather than purchasing a guide for Advent. I agreed. It took a bit of encouraging to get my associates excited about writing about Advent in spring and summer. We divided the days evenly, and I wrote the Christmas Day reflection. We finalized it in the fall of 2024, and Christy did her magic to make it look beautiful for Advent. I knew while I was writing the reflections that summer that I wanted to try this again for the Lenten Season, and I wanted to write the entire reflection booklet myself. I also knew that it would take time with my schedule, so I planned to write each reflection on the corresponding Lenten day in 2025. That means that when you read my reflection for Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026, I wrote the reflection on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. So, I am walking with you on this journey.

My intention for writing this 2026 Lenten Guide is to help you walk through the 40 days of Lent and the 6 Sundays of Lent with one easy thought to keep in your mind or heart each day. There is nothing hard or impossible to do in these reflections. Like the Advent Guide of 2024, there is a reflection, a challenge, and a prayer each day of Lent. I hope this reflection guide helps you have a fruitful Lenten season.

Happy Lent!

Father John

February 18, 2026—Ash Wednesday – Day 1

Joel 2:12-18 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Psalm 95:8

Day one. I can do this! It's only 40 days, Lord. I promise to be a better person, to change the direction of my life. I want to live for you rather than myself. I am ready to deny myself the things I enjoy: scrolling the internet, shopping on Amazon, listening to sports podcasts, eating sweets, and having that evening cocktail. I am ready to give it up if it means I can be closer to you.

We all have said the things above on the first day of Lent. In fact, we say them every year! The reality is that day one is not day one of 40 days, it's day one of the rest of our spiritual lives. The Church provides us with this sacred time as an opportunity to change, to refocus, and to grow. It was never meant to be a nice and neat 40-day package that would lead us to a better spiritual life with God come Easter Sunday. It is an opportunity to see the need for God in our life and to work towards making him the center of our existence.

The ashes, dirty and worthless as they are, remind us that we are nothing without God. All too often, we are like the hypocrites in the Gospel reading. In our day, we just go back to bad practices and walk gently and quietly away from our Lord, hoping he won't notice.

On this day one, think of this Lenten journey as a time of complete cleansing: not just a time to kick bad habits such as eating too much, but to wipe away that which eats at our relationship with God. It is not so much the things we give up in

Lent but the things we must tame which are connected to the darkness from within: to be selfish, to control, to judge, to distance, to avoid, to ignore, and to reject. This will take more than the next 40 days.

In this Lenten Season, find time to spend with the Lord. It has never been about quantity, but rather quality. Some suggestions I offer are as old as the Christian life itself: find a private space you call your own, a quick visit to the adoration chapel each day, attend a daily Mass each week, and listen for the Lord's calling.

Daily Challenge

The responsorial psalm for Ash Wednesday is the 51st Psalm. Open your scriptures and read the psalm again. Focus on the phrase, *"thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me."* Ask the Lord to guide your heart to know what in your life needs the most cleansing. When you finish, say a prayer of Thanksgiving.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, on this first day of Lent, I ask for your blessings upon me. Create a clean heart in me and cleanse me of my sinfulness. Give me the patience to know how to walk with you these next 40 days, open to your mercy and forgiveness, desiring your presence, and knowing of your constant compassion and love. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 19, 2026 – Thursday after Ash Wednesday – Day 2

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

Luke 9:22-25

***What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or
forfeit himself?*** Luke 9:25

Okay, this is only day two, and I am so hungry. Why did I eat so little yesterday? The Church says we must fast on Ash Wednesday. It does not say we have to starve ourselves. This is going to be a long Lent. Lord, help me this Lenten season to be able to draw closer, despite my shortcomings.

There is no doubt that you may have said these exact words during one of your Lenten journeys. On day 2, the readings present us with choices. We can choose ourselves because we have free will. In the first reading, Moses speaks to his people and gives them commandments. If they choose to abide by them, they will experience life. If not, death is the other option.

In the Gospel, the choice is between the cross or one's own life. The cross leads to life and one's own life leads to death. The Christian life means we have chosen the commandments and the cross already. Nonetheless, choosing correctly does not mean it is easy. The fact that you woke up this morning hungry or were tempted to return to social media after 24 hours or wanted to dive into a dozen cookies is a sign that the journey is a long one and the cross is heavy. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord, the Psalmist writes. Our hope is that our Lord will help us in our weakness and give us the strength to get through this day. With his compassion and mercy, everything is possible, including remaining faithful to our Lenten promises.

Daily Challenge

To keep your focus on the Lord and not on any discomfort due to what you are denying yourself, do something today that is spiritually rewarding to you, so you don't feel you are in a constant state of self-denial. Attend Mass, help a neighbor in need, pray for those who are truly hungry and thirsting for justice, pray for the unborn and that everyone chooses life, write a check to your favorite charity, or call a friend whom you haven't heard from in while.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, give me the grace to choose wisely to live your commandments and to pick up my cross and follow You. Fill me with a sense of hope to desire to live for You daily. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 20, 2026 – Friday after Ash Wednesday – Day 3

Isaiah 58:1-9a

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6b, 18-19

Matt 9:14-15

A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

Psalm 51

We compare ourselves to one another all the time. Most of the time we are almost unaware that we are doing so. We compare ourselves in various ways: the clothing we wear, what we look like, and whether we are older or younger than another. We compare ourselves with the types of houses we live in, the type of car we drive, or the positions we have at our workplaces. We compare ourselves to whether we are more likeable, successful, or better looking than another. It's what we do. In today's Gospel, John's disciples question why Jesus' disciples did not fast while they and the disciples of the Pharisees did. Jesus answers that they do not need to fast while he is present, but there would be a time to fast.

Today's Gospel is not meant to tell us that in the Lenten season we do not need to fast. We still need to fast on the Fridays of Lent (those under 60). However, we encounter in the first reading from Isaiah what type of fasting the Lord wishes us to do. He says, *"...this is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own."* That is true fasting.

The next time you think about comparing yourself to another for whatever reason, replace the need to "compare" with a

need to “fast”. This fasting is not about skipping desserts on Fridays of Lent or coming up with a formula for how much to eat but how to share what you have with someone in need. Fasting means not comparing but living rightly.

Daily Challenge

Read the 51st Psalm again and focus on this verse, *“My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.”* On this Friday of Lent, with a contrite heart, make your fasting an act of love towards someone in need.

Lenten Prayer

Good and gracious God, You have made me in Your own image and likeness. Help me to see You in everyone I encounter today and allow my fasting to bring peace to my soul, joy to another, and love to the world. May this Lenten day draw me one step closer to You by my words, thoughts, and deeds. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 21, 2026 – Saturday after Ash Wednesday – Day 4

Isaiah 58:9b-14

Psalm 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Luke 5:27-32

I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners. Luke 5:32b

I am not sure about you, but I have noticed that in the last 25 years or so, it seems that people judge one another very quickly without thinking. It used to be about the kinds of clothing people wore, how they did their hair, the language they chose to use, or the friends they associated with. But today, judging another happens on so many profound levels. For example, after 9/11 we judged people on their religion and believed if they practiced Islam, they were terrorists. Since the internet and social media are now at the center of our daily existence, we find it appropriate to judge people halfway across the country or around the world for their political points of view, the way they live their lives, and the choices they make or don't make. We use labels such as "cultic" or "woke" to define people without knowing one thing about them. I fear it is getting worse.

In today's Gospel we have the Pharisees judging Jesus for dining with tax collectors, as well as judging the tax collectors themselves because of their infamous claims to cheat people. Jesus' answer to the Pharisees is that sick people need healing; therefore, He would be present to them.

In reality, we are sick. Sin has marked us with the inability to live a life totally dedicated to the Lord. We can't keep the basic commandments and often can't see our own sinfulness. Today,

Jesus speaks to us, not the Pharisees. We are those who need healing, and he invites us to dine with him. This invitation is to let him into our hearts to dwell there so as to heal us of our own infirmities. If we do, the judgmental attitudes we possess may dissipate.

Daily Challenge

Seek out a person that you may have judged recently. If they are close to you, seek forgiveness from them. If they are unknown persons or groups of people, pray for them this evening during your prayer time.

Lenten Prayer

O God, heal me of my infirmities that prevent me from truly accepting your invitation to dwell within me. Take away my stony heart and fill me with the desire to see in you my brothers and sisters. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 22, 2026 – First Sunday of Lent – Jesus in the Desert

*Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7 Psalm 51:30-4,5-6,12-13, 17 Romans
5:12-19 Matthew 4:1-11*

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.'" Matt 4:4

For Jesus, his time in the desert was a time away from the crowds. It was time away to be by himself and with his Heavenly Father. For him, there was no time to think of being hungry or lonely. This is the one reason the devil failed to change Jesus' heart. Jesus had no time for things of this world. On the other hand, for us, a desert experience could be a nightmare. There is nothing there to keep our minds from wandering and focusing on worldly things. However, on this day, the desert for us is not a physical place of heat, hunger, and solitude. The term "desert" itself refers to stripping away all that we are familiar with, such as food and material things, which get in the way of our relationship with God. Then, we will have the capacity to get in touch with whom we really are: alone with God and no one else. It involves time: the scriptures say 40 days and nights. It involves fasting. It involves prayer. And, believe me, there will be temptation. We desire to eat, consume, and be with others. In some ways, we are never satisfied. The desert makes us aware we are without and so the devil takes advantage of this and says, "You don't need your God now." On this day, are you willing to enter your own desert experience and leave the world behind? If you say, "yes," the devil will start to work on you. We already think we know what is best in our lives and what we

should do with them. For many people, God is on the back burner. The desert experience will remind us of our limitations and so the devil will take advantage of that. Be ready!

Daily Challenge

The responsorial psalm for the First Sunday of Lent, like Ash Wednesday, is the 51st Psalm. Open your scriptures and read the psalm again. Focus again on the phrase, *“thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.”* Ask for strength in desert times. Ask Him to guide your heart to know what in your life needs the most cleansing. When you finish, say a prayer of Thanksgiving.

Lenten Prayer

Lord, I ask You to bless me today with Your grace and Your presence. As I willingly enter into the desert, be with me and help me avoid the temptations of life. May You be first in all I say, think, and do. I seek that which will help my heart burn for You and You alone. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 23, 2026 – Monday of the First Week of Lent – Day 5

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

Psalm 19:8,9,10, 15

Matthew 25:31-46

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2COR 6:2b

Think about it: Hunger, thirst, nakedness, and caring for those in need. In this very blunt Gospel today, Jesus says that if we do not act to take care of those who lack these basic human needs, we will ultimately be separated from God. Yes, separated from God and damned! In addition, our first reading from Leviticus calls us to follow the commandments of the Lord which can be summarized as simply loving our neighbor.

By now, our Lenten routines and practices should be set. We know what we have given up; we know what we want to do and the things to avoid. We may even be successful at it at this point in our Lenten season. What about feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and visiting those in need? These basic corporal works of mercy go hand in hand with our commandment to love one another as we love ourselves. What good is it for us to control our basic desires and become closer to the Lord and yet ignore those in need? It's a stark choice. Giving up sweets or spending more time in prayer is empty without the corporal works of mercy. Now is the acceptable hour. The work is hard but the rewards are heavenly.

Daily Challenge

Pick one corporal work of mercy and sometime in the week ahead act on it, all the while reflecting on today's psalm, "*Your words Lord are spirit and life.*"

Lenten Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You taught us to care for the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, and the needy. I humbly come before You, asking for Your grace and strength to fulfill the corporal works of mercy with love and compassion. Grant me the courage to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead so that I may reflect Your love in all my actions. May my heart be moved with the same compassion You showed to those in need. Help me to serve You by serving others and to always do so with a humble and loving heart. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 24, 2026 – Tuesday of the First Week of Lent – Day 6

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalms 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19

Matthew 6:7-15

One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Matt 4:4b

When I was in the seminary long ago, my first spiritual director told me that I needed to develop a prayer life that fit my personality and drew me closer to the Lord. He told me it should not be “babbling” prayers. Today, Jesus says that to his disciples and to us, as he teaches us the “Our Father.” If we take the readings as a whole today, the teaching is clear; the word of God fulfills its purpose, which is completing the will of God, our Father. Our prayer should be sincere. A lot of words are not necessary. The Lord already knows what is in our hearts. All we have to do is seek forgiveness and work for the good of others and forgive them as part of our Christian life.

Daily Challenge

Find your prayer space. Make sure it is quiet. Relax and take deep breaths. Reflect on God as your Father who is loving, guiding, and providing. Ask yourself how you have experienced God in your life this very day. Pray the phrase “Father, help me trust in your love and providence.” Plan on a time to go to confession in the next few weeks.

Lenten Prayer

Lord God, just as the rain and snow fall from the heavens and do not return without nourishing the earth, your Word comes to us with power and purpose. During this Lenten Season, I open my heart to receive the richness of Your Word, that it may water the soil of my soul, bringing forth repentance and transformation.

May Your Word accomplish in me what You have promised, changing my heart, deepening my faith, and guiding me on the path of righteousness. I ask You to send forth Your Word to heal the wounds of my heart, to turn me away from sin, and to renew my spirits in Your grace. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD.

Amen.

February 25, 2026 – Wednesday of the First Week of Lent – Day 7

Jonah 3:1-10 Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19 Luke 11:29-32

A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

Psalm 51:19b

As a child, I loved the story of Jonah and the whale. Somehow, being swallowed by a whale and transported to another place fascinated me. But what is wonderful about this story as an adult is the conversion of Nineveh. The people listened; they really listened. Today's first reading has a direct connection to the Gospel. In this passage, Jesus addresses the crowds, stating that no sign will be given to them except the sign of Jonah. He draws a parallel between Jonah's call to Nineveh and His own message, highlighting the importance of repentance and recognizing the presence of God's kingdom. These readings collectively underscore the themes of repentance, mercy, and God's willingness to forgive, which are central to the Lenten journey.

We are now a week into this Lent. Do you see signs of growth? Do you have a repentant heart? Have you had any setbacks? If so, it is not too late to start again. It was not too late for Nineveh, and it is never too late for us with God's mercy and forgiveness.

Daily Challenge

Once again, the responsorial psalm for today is the 51st Psalm. Open your scriptures and read the psalm again. Focus on the phrase, *"thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me."* Ask the Lord to guide your heart to know what in

your life needs the most cleansing. When you finish, say a prayer of Thanksgiving. Made a time to go to confession yet?

Lenten Prayer

Lord Jesus, You spoke to the crowds, calling them to repentance, reminding them of the signs of Your love and mercy. I ask for the grace to open my heart to the truth that You reveal to me, just as You spoke to the people of Nineveh and to the Queen of Sheba. Help me, Lord, not to seek signs and wonders as proof of Your presence, but to trust in Your Word and embrace the call to conversion.

Grant me the humility to acknowledge the need for Your grace, and may I, like the people of Nineveh, turn away from sin and follow Your path of righteousness. May I seek wisdom in Your Word, as the Queen of Sheba sought understanding from Solomon, and may I always grow in faith and love for You.

I pray for the strength to repent and the courage to live out my faith with joy, knowing that You are ever-present and ready to guide me with Your eternal love. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD.

Amen.

February 26, 2026 – Thursday of the First Week of Lent – Day 8

*Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25
2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8*

*Psalms 138:1-
Matthew 7:7-12*

Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets. Matt 7:12

Today's Gospel is one that we are familiar with: ask, seek and knock. But, if we look deeper into what we are reading, these verses emphasize the boundless generosity and love of God. He is always ready to listen to us and provide what we need, though it may not always be exactly what we expect or in the timing we desire. Sometimes, the "good gift" God gives might look different from what we anticipate, but it is always in accordance with his will and what is truly best for us. Faith and trust are key here—believing that God knows what we need better than we do .

Verse 12 which reads *"Do to others whatever you would have them do to you"* mirrors the essence of Catholic social teaching, which emphasizes the dignity of every human being. If we truly believe that every person is made in the image and likeness of God, then our interactions with others must reflect this truth. Whether in our families, communities, or the wider world, living the Golden Rule calls us to create environments where love, justice, and charity are present.

Today's Gospel is a beautiful reminder of God's generous nature and the call to live in loving relationship with both God and our neighbors. We are invited to approach God with confidence in prayer, trusting that He will provide for our needs. At the same

time, we are called to live out our faith by loving others as Christ has loved us, treating them with the same kindness and respect that we desire. As Catholics, this passage invites us to deepen our relationship with God and grow in our commitment to love one another, building a community rooted in compassion and mercy.

Daily Challenge

Answer the questions, then read yesterday's Psalm 51.

- Do I approach God in prayer with faith and honesty, asking for what I truly need, not just what I want? Am I willing to listen as much as I speak in prayer?
- Do my actions reflect the love and generosity of God? Am I consistent in my faith, or do I struggle to translate my beliefs into my daily life?
- Do I love others unconditionally, as God loves me? Can I extend mercy and generosity without expecting anything in return?

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I ask for Your forgiveness for the many sins I commit on a daily basis. I seek Your mercy and peace in my heart most so that I can be Your faithful servant. Fill me with what I need so I am not an empty vessel, but a person who knows how to love unconditionally, as You love me. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

February 27, 2026 – Friday of the First Week of Lent – Day 9

Ezekiel 18:21-28

Psalms 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8

Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: “I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.” Matt 5:20

Today’s readings present us with options: to be virtuous or wicked, to live righteously or not. On this Lenten day, we may not feel like a truly wicked person and certainly we try to be righteous. After all, we are people of faith. We have entered into this penitential season not because we do not try to be virtuous or righteous but because we fail so often to perfect them in our lives. What is righteousness? What is virtue? True righteousness goes beyond external actions and requires a purity of heart, one that is expressed in love, mercy, and reconciliation. We are called not only to follow the commandments but to live in a way that promotes peace, harmony, and healing. In doing so, we will fulfill the deeper righteousness that Jesus calls us to—a righteousness that reflects the love of God and transforms the world around us.

It is interesting in the urgency in Jesus’ tone; we must act quickly. He warns about the urgency of reconciliation, advising that we settle disputes quickly before they escalate. If we delay or ignore conflict, it can lead to worse consequences, potentially affecting our spiritual well-being and the peace of our communities. Jesus urges us to act swiftly and decisively in making peace, as holding onto grudges or allowing anger to fester only increases tension and suffering.

In this continuation of the Sermon on the Mount, as with his disciples, Jesus teaches us how to act. In order to really practice love and mercy, we must also strive for righteousness and virtue.

Daily Challenge

Plan to go to confession before this season of Lent passes you by. The days of Lent go by quickly. On this Friday of Lent, along with your abstinence, reflect on the Cardinal Virtues of our faith: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. Which one do you most need help with? In your prayer time with the Lord, ask for the grace to increase virtue in your life.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I come before You today with a humble heart, seeking to live according to Your Will. You call me to a righteousness that goes beyond mere outward appearances, to a heart that loves and forgives, as You have shown me. Grant me the grace to seek peace in all my relationships, to not hold on to anger or bitterness, but to reconcile with my brothers and sisters as You reconcile with us. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD.

Amen.

February 28, 2026 – Saturday of the First Week of Lent – Day 10

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8

Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners." Matt 5:48

"So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." The last verse of today's Gospel is the real challenge for today. Do you understand perfection? "Perfect" refers to something that is flawless or without any faults. It describes a state or quality of being exactly right or complete, meeting all the necessary standards or expectations. Essentially, "perfect" suggests the highest standard or ideal in a given situation. Well, we all have learned in this Lenten Season we are far from perfect. Did you eat meat yesterday? Have you faltered on your Lenten promises? Has your Lent been "successful" at this quarter mark? Have you been perfect in all things this Lent, reflecting on God's mercy and love in every situation? Most of us could not say "Yes" to all of the above. We are far from "perfect."

Today's readings as a whole call us to follow the Lord's commandments. Once again, we are reminded to love the Lord our God and neighbor as ourselves. But Jesus challenges us that our love must go the extra mile and love those who are hard to love. This is where perfection comes in. We are closer to perfect when there are no conditions on our love or forgiveness.

Look at it in another way. In Luke's Gospel, this same verse says be "merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful". It does not say "perfect." In other words, we can achieve what the Lord wants of us by practicing mercy without ceasing. Think about it.

Daily Challenge

One act of mercy towards another. Do it before you go to Mass this weekend.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I ask Your blessing on this Lenten day. I strive to live the way You ask and follow Your commandments. Forgive me for the times I fall short in following Your commandments and fail to show mercy to those most in need. Fill me with Your grace, mercy, and compassion so I may be a vessel of these gifts to others. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD.

Amen.

March 1, 2026 – Second Sunday of Lent – The Transfiguration

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalms 33:4-5,18-19,20,22

2Timothy 1:8b-10

Matthew 17:1-9

***And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else
but Jesus alone.*** Matt 17:8

Every year we hear the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus on the second Sunday of Lent and then again on August 6th, the Feast of the Transfiguration. On this first day of March, have you thought about what this event meant to the Apostles who witnessed it? It allowed Peter, James, and John to understand what the ministry of Jesus was about: healing the sick and preaching the Good News to those who needed it. His was not an earthly Kingdom. It allowed them to understand their own mission. It was not about an earthly reward; it was all about doing exactly as Jesus did. They were to deny themselves and pick up their crosses. In the Transfiguration, Jesus showed them the truth and the path to salvation.

Do you ever think what it means to you? I will offer you this: The glory of Jesus reveals the path and the way to the Father. Remember the desert! Satan is ready to lead us away from the Father. Do you understand the nature of Jesus' healings? Do you understand the nature of the Word? Do you understand your discipleship? It is the Cross and only the Cross. Many will give up, give in, and fall away. In the Transfiguration, Jesus shows us the truth and the path to salvation. So, what is the path? Look at the Transfiguration once again. The disciples see the *glory of Christ*. They say, "*How good it is for us to be here.*" A

cloud overshadows them. They are fearful. They hear a voice from the cloud, "*This is my beloved son, listen to him.*" In the end, they look up and see *only Jesus*.

Do you truly understand the Transfiguration of Jesus? Only Jesus can show us the path. Look at the Transfiguration in reverse. When we see only Jesus, we begin to hear the voice of God. We may be afraid or be overwhelmed, but, in the midst of our fear, we will be able to proclaim how good it is for us to be here, to be following Christ, his path. Then, we will experience the glory of our own resurrection.

Daily Challenge

The Transfiguration of Jesus is about seeing, hearing, and living. Today, look around you for the presence of God. It won't be in some mysterious event. It may be in a phone call to a family member, the face of your grandchild, or simply the person next to you in the pews. Seek it out! Next, listen intently to the words at Mass. Not just the readings but the prayers, as well. What is the Lord saying to you? Finally, perform an act of kindness that transfigures your normal routine.

Lenten Prayer

Transfigure me, Lord, transfigure me. Open my eyes to see only You in my brothers and sisters, so I see Your glory revealed. Open my ears to hear You speak to my heart and to my soul on how I am to respond to Your grace. Transform my entire being into an instrument of Your love, compassion, forgiveness, and mercy. Transfigure me, Lord, transfigure me. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 2, 2026 – Monday of the Second Week of Lent – Day 11

Daniel 9:4b-10

Psalm 79: 8,9 ,11 & 13 Luke 6:36-38

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Luke 6:36

Now, we hear Luke's version of what we heard this past Saturday, day 10. Today, we are challenged to forgive and to show mercy with a promise that what we give will return to us. To know when we give, we are truly blessed. In my own life, there have been countless times when I lent a hand, gave of my time or treasure, and I was blessed in return, sometimes very quickly. That is the truth. Today is day 11. I promised as the days go by in this Lenten Season, the things we put in place to help us focus on this Lent would be challenged and perhaps fall by the wayside. In reality, the qualities of mercy and forgiveness are essential in keeping those promises.

Daily Challenge

What things have been poured out in your lap this Lent? What blessings have you received? This day, take a little of what you have received and give it to another.

Lenten Prayer

O God, on this Lenten day, I turn to You to help me to be forgiving at all times. May my words, thoughts, and actions build up Your Heavenly Kingdom here on earth rather than destroy it. May mercy pour forth from my heart and lips reflecting the mercy You pour into my lap. As always, may Your Will be done. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 3, 2026 – Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent – Day 12

Isaiah 1:10,16-20

Psalms 50:8-9,16bc-17, 21 and 23

Matthew 23:1-12

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matt 23:12

Today's Gospel is a very clear warning to his disciples not to be like the scribes and Pharisees. Their problem is that they did everything for show. Their holiness was all for everyone to see; from their phylacteries to their tassels, they are saying, "look how holy I am." From their title of "Rabbi" to the seats at banquets, it all spoke to others of their importance, not just in the community, but to the world. I am better than you.

But, there was a problem with this mindset. It was all for show. Jesus exposed the emptiness deep within each of them. Do not be like them. They are wrong; they will lead you astray.

I have said many times we are not scribes and Pharisees, but often we act like them. On this day, Isaiah challenges us to wash ourselves clean on the outside so our insides can be revealed. But what is on the inside matters. Like Jesus says, we must not only be open to being washed clean of our sinfulness, but walk humbly before our God. On day 12 of this Lenten season, is that our reality?

Daily Challenge

Within the next few days, find a way to be of service to another by humbling yourself before God. If this is impossible for you to do, say a prayer that those in authority in the Church will be true servants of all.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I place myself before You in my sinfulness and my guilt. Wash me from my sins so I can truly be a humble servant destined to serve the poor and needy not just in my community, but in anyone I encounter. May my true act of faithfulness be a heart contrite and open to Your will.

THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 4, 2026 – Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent – Day 13

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 31:5–6, 14, 15–16

Matthew 20:17-28

Incline your ear to me; make haste to rescue me! Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to save me. Psalm 31:3

In our lives, we are seldom completely open and honest with those around us, even our closest family and friends. We always keep certain things to ourselves. Jesus in today's Gospel reveals something so intimate and special to his Apostles that the only reaction should be one of reflection, awe, and prayer. For us, this would be like sharing something we never shared before with a group of friends. We would think that our friends would be quiet, reflective, supportive, and prayerful. But no. In the Gospel, the mother of James and John blows past the intimate moment with a request: I want my sons to be at your side in this kingdom of yours.

I have two points to share with you today. All of us keep things to ourselves, but sometimes like Jesus with his Apostles, we need to express our thoughts, our innermost thoughts. The best option for these is the Lord. He will not react like the mother of the sons of Zebedee, but be compassionate, forgiving, and, most of all, understanding. After all, he knows our very being. At times, we can be like the mother of James and John and be very demanding with the Lord, all the while not being totally open with him. As the Gospel states, it's not about being "first" or "great" in the Kingdom of God; it's about being a servant of all here on earth.

Daily Challenge

Yesterday's challenge was to find a way to be of service to another. Today, I add this thought to the challenge. You may have been a "mother of Zebedee's sons" in your life at some point. Challenge yourself to seek forgiveness from the Lord for meddling in the life of someone close to you. Seek forgiveness from the Lord, and pray for this person or persons.

Lenten Prayer

Lord God, teach me to be more intimate with You by opening myself heart, soul, and mind to living out Your will. Forgive me for the times that I thought I knew best and help me to be more humble as You walk with me this Lent. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 5, 2026 – Thursday of the Second Week of Lent – Day 14

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6

Luke 16:19-31

Then Abraham said, “If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.” Luke 16:31

How many times have you thought about winning the lottery (the nearly 1-billion-dollar prize) and what you would do with the money you won. To their credit, many people say they would share it with their children to make a better life for themselves and their family. Some would quit their jobs and retire. Those who actually win the lottery are more than likely going to spend it faster than it comes in. We are all familiar with those winners who go broke and lose everything they have. We never hear stories about a Lottery winner who gives their money to the poor and those in need. That would make a nice television show instead of *My Lottery Dream Home*. The rich man in today's Gospel was so rich he was blind to the poor, the needy, and the sick around him. After all, he earned that money, and it was his. Why should he care about those around him? However, Jesus, in telling this story, reveals that our decisions or indecisions really do matter. His focus on the good life and the “things” he had on this earth meant that his reward was here and only here. Our choices make a difference. Some are more important than others.

Try to become rich in this life and, if successful, enjoy the good life, or try to become rich in this life and, if successful, share it

with those in need. The first option rewards us in this life; the second rewards us with eternal life.

Use our time on this earth centered on ourselves, or use our time in this life to live the Gospel and care for those in need. The first option only brings partial joy that is limited to the years we live here; the second rewards us with eternal joy in the presence of God.

Daily Challenge

Pick one or two:

- 1) Today would be a perfect day to review those we may have ignored in our life; perhaps due to our busy schedule or simply focusing on self a little too much. Reach out to someone who needs to know we care for them.
- 2) Volunteer with our missions committee and work directly with the poor in our community. Our annual volunteer day is this Saturday. Sign up!
- 3) Spend an hour in Adoration with our Lord and review your life. Make a list of those we may have forgotten about or ignored. Offer a prayer for them.

Lenten Prayer

O God, I am a sinner. Please help me be more aware of those in need that are around me: sitting in the pew next to me, at my place of work, or in my household. Give me the courage and strength to reach out and offer them comfort, love, and peace. May my actions reflect my desire to live with You for all eternity. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 6, 2026 – Friday of the Second Week of Lent – Day 15

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

Psalm 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21 Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

***God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son;
so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal
life.*** John 3:16

Bearing Fruit is a common theme during the Lenten Season. Each Lent, our practices, our penances, our additional prayer time, and our acts of kindness and servitude, hopefully, will draw us closer to the Lord. This bears fruit in our lives by fostering a deeper relationship with our Lord, recognizing our sinfulness, creating a heart contrite and humble, and developing a more intense desire to live the Gospel in word and action.

But today, day 15 of 40, we probably recognize that turning back to the Lord, bearing fruit and developing a more profound relationship with the Lord is going to take more than 40 days, indeed more than the 25 remaining days in this Lent. What has your Lent been like? Have you any idea which type of fruit you are called to bear? If you look at just the Gospel, this season invites us to renew our commitment to God's kingdom, to produce the fruits of repentance, justice, and love. Just as God sent His Son to offer salvation to the world, open your heart to Him and bear fruit that reflects His goodness and grace.

Daily Challenge

As we approach the mid-point of Lent, you may realize that this turning back to the Lord is more difficult than first thought. Focus on only one fruit that you wish to bear this Lent, and figure out what steps are necessary to truly produce fruit in your life.

Step One: Identify a weakness that still exists in your life.

Step Two: What do you want to accomplish with this weakness in the next 25 days? Be realistic.

Step Three: Create an action plan for reducing its footprint in your life and acting on it.

Step Four: Pray about it, asking the Lord's intercession.

Step Five: Do It!

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I ask You to help me not to allow my wickedness or sinfulness to prevent me from bearing fruit for Your Kingdom here on earth. Fill me with Your justice and peace and give me what is necessary to live in Your presence this Lenten Season and every day of my life. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 7, 2026 – Saturday of the Second Week of Lent – Day 16

*Micah 7:14-15, 18-20 Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12
Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*

The Lord is kind and merciful. Psalm 13:8a

The Lord is kind and merciful. We are all familiar with the story of the prodigal son. I remember once in the seminary, one of our homiletic professors had us choose who we were in this story: The Father, the prodigal son, his brother who remained home, the local citizen, the Father's servant, or one of the party guests.

It's hard to imagine any one of us being as welcoming to a son who strayed and squandered all his inheritance as the father in this story. But, it is possible. We all have the prodigal son in us. I want it my way and my way now. We all have the brother in us: trying to do the right thing, but still focused on self. We could be that local citizen who saw someone in need or simply a servant doing his job and staying out of the tense situation and never really committed to one side or the other. We all have the party guest in us, ready to party no matter what the reason but unaware of what is going on behind the scenes.

The truth is that we can be any one of the characters in this story. We can be compassionate at times, rebellious or obedient, angry, going through the motions, caring, or looking to simply have a good time. This Lent, who are we? How close are we to being the "Father"? Remember, the Lord is kind and merciful. Have mercy on me, Lord, a sinner.

Daily Challenge

Read the Gospel story again. This time, identify who is most like you in the story. Pray for the gift or gifts to become more like the Father, full of forgiveness and compassion. Pray for someone whom you may have hurt in your own rebellious phase of life.

Lenten Prayer

O Lord, I need Your forgiveness and mercy. Help me to return to You completely and openly. May Your constant forgiveness and mercy allow me to do Your Will and become the “father” to all I encounter. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 8, 2026 – Third Sunday of Lent – The Samaritan Woman

*Exodus 17:3-7 Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9 Romans 5:1-2, 5-8
John 4:5-42*

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. John 4:8

For the next three Sundays, we will focus on themes which emerge this Easter Season beginning with the vigil. They are three very long Gospels but wonderful stories which reveal the importance of water, light, and resurrection. To understand this more, we look at the first of these three Gospels from John, which is focused on lifegiving water. The story of the Samaritan woman is also a conversion story. To understand the theme of lifegiving water, we need to look at conversion. There are actually two conversions.

The first conversion occurs in our first reading, which relates the story of how the Israelites, who have been just liberated from Egypt rise up and complain against Moses for having led them out to the desert where there is no water. The Israelites complain that if Moses does not find them any water soon, they will surely perish. Moses asks God to help once again. God vindicates Moses by providing water from the rock that Moses strikes. This leads to the Israelites coming to faith in God.

The second conversion occurs with the Samaritan woman at the well with our Lord. Samaritans were despised and hated by the Jews. So, for Jesus to be addressing a Samaritan woman alone was almost scandalous. However, Jesus' interest lay in the conversion occurring in the heart of the Samaritan woman. The

Lord uses her curiosity to reveal to her His divine identity and He does it little by little: He shows that He knows about her life, the secrets of her heart; He can even read her conscience.

Jesus describes her conversion of heart in terms of the water in the well. When Jesus describes the water that he will give and describes it as a spring of water welling up to eternal life, our Lord is using water to describe the grace that He gives which nourishes the soul and quenches its thirst for God. This ties into our first reading from Exodus.

As the full conversion of the Samaritan woman transpires, Jesus reveals Himself to her as the Messiah, the Christ. In this final step of conversion, the Samaritan woman has come from acknowledging her sins to accepting the true teaching about worshipping the Father in spirit and its truth.

Like the Samaritan woman, we become foreigners to God when we sin. Yet, God seeks us out as Jesus did with the woman at the well. She takes a great risk in allowing herself to spend time with the Lord alone. We can choose to respond in a way similar to the Israelites of Moses' day who didn't even recognize God's presence among them and doubted his very existence. Or we can imitate the Samaritan woman, who came to faith in Christ, not by a physical miracle but by a true openness to the work of the Holy Spirit and a special grace to face the truth. Water satisfies our thirst. It refreshes us and cleanses us. Thus, it points us in the direction of Easter.

Daily Challenge

This week reflect upon the conversion of the Samaritan woman and how she came to faith. Reflect on the words “conversion,”

“thirst,” “repentance,” and the “grace” God offered the Samaritan woman and each of us.

Lenten Prayer

Lord Jesus, You met the Samaritan woman at the well, and through Your words, You offered her living water. Like her, I come before You, longing for Your mercy and Your love. Open my heart to receive the living water of Your Spirit, that I may be nourished by Your presence and grace. Through Your living water, cleanse me from sin, renew my spirit, and lead me to eternal life. I place my trust in You, Jesus, for You are the way, the truth, and the life. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 9, 2026 – Monday of the Third Week of Lent – Day 17

2 Kings 5:1-15ab

Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4

Luke 4:24-30

*I hope in the LORD, I trust in his word; with him there is
kindness and plenteous redemption.* Psalm 130:7

Today, the first reading and the Gospel are connected by Naaman the Syrian and the theme of this week: water that cleanses and quenches thirst. But rather than focus on Naaman, I want you to think about how we sometimes think we can control how God works in our lives. Remember, Naaman wanted a quick fix to his leprosy. This is day 17 of this Lenten journey. Often, like Naaman, we want to control our faith life with God. We go only so far in turning back to him but still keep conditions on the relationship. In other words, our heart, soul, mind, and strength are parceled out like an ice dispenser. Lord, I am faithful to You in my life, I need this healing of my family. Lord, I defend the Church at every opportunity I have, deliver me from this illness. Not too much, but just enough, so we think. You may have had a great Lent so far and kept all your Lenten promises. Put it aside. You may have had a terrible Lent where nothing has gone right and chocolate is so hard to resist. Put it aside. The Lord really wants nothing but our total being. When we give that to the Lord, we are cleansed and our thirst is quenched. A soul can only be quenched by the living God, when we totally surrender to our Lord. It is possible; it is only day 17!

Lent is not about wrapping ourselves up in a nice package to the Lord as a present to him on Easter. It is nothing more than a reminder that our Lord will work in us at his pace, not ours, whether that be one day, 40 days, or 40 years. After all, water

quenches thirst yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Just open your being to the presence of God.

Daily Challenge

In your prayers for today, whether in the morning, mid-day, or evening, place this thought in your inner most sanctuary, *“Be patient with yourself and be patient with God.”*

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, my soul thirsts for You, my living God. Cleanse me of my sinfulness so I may be a worthy vessel of Your presence. I seek Your forgiveness, compassion, and mercy and strive to do Your will. Give me the patience to understand how You work within my life and the peace to know You will cleanse me with love. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 10, 2026 – Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent – Day 18

Daniel 3:25, 34-4

Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9

Matthew 18:21-35

Remember your mercies, O Lord. Psalm 25:6

Today, our focus is on the parable of the unforgiving servant. I don't know about you, but every time I read this parable, I am hoping that the servant does the right thing and forgives like his master forgave him. Every time, he does the same thing.

Forgiveness is hard. Even as a priest, I can tell you the hardest people to forgive are family members. I can forgive almost everyone else. No hard feelings when it comes to people who are not that close to me. I can only imagine what was going on in the minds of the Apostles when Jesus told them to forgive seven times seven times. He's got to be kidding, right? That is why this parable is so pointed because we all do the same thing. Lord, forgive me, but without that forgiveness for those who do us harm.

What good is our almsgiving, prayers, and fasting, if we are not open to forgiving? This is a season of mercy and forgiveness. The challenge for us this Lent is to learn to forgive without reservations. It's only day 18; there is still time to forgive and let go. You will be a much happier person if you do so.

Daily Challenge

In your prayer time today, make a list of those you have not forgiven over the years. Make plans to reconcile this Lent. If you have reconciled with everyone, say a prayer of thanksgiving.

Lenten Prayer

O Lord, thank You for this day and the chance to receive Your forgiveness. Through my works of charity and desire to grow closer to You, grant me forgiveness for the times I have failed You and the power to forgive when I lack that same mercy.

THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.

March 11, 2026 – Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent – Day 19

*Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9 Psalm 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20
Matthew 5:17-19*

***Whoever obeys and teaches these commandments
will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.*** Matt 5:19

Following the commandments is something we all have been taught from an early age. But keeping the commandments are only part of what we as Catholics are called to do. This is day 19 of our Lenten journey. If you are keeping the commandments, good for you. However, there is much more in the readings today. As stated in the first reading, following the law of the Lord reveals more than obedience. It reveals a certain amount of wisdom and intelligence to those we encounter. It is wise to follow the Lord. Within keeping the statutes, there is a notion of teaching others what we have learned. The Gospel adds a sense of greatness to keeping the law of the Lord. Follow, and you will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Fail to do so, and we have nothing.

This Lent needs to be about learning to follow the commandments but also recognizing that in our spiritual lives, when we follow the commandants, we reflect the wisdom of God and the teaching authority that comes with doing so.

Do you understand this?

Daily Challenge

Use today to teach another about the Love of God; perhaps through an act of mercy or forgiveness or charity or kindness. At the end of the day, pray for those who do not follow the commandments of the Lord.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, teach me how to live Your commandments faithfully. Give me the wisdom to choose You over my pride, selfishness, and arrogance. Give me true wisdom to seek You out in living the commandments and receiving the sacraments. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 12, 2026 – Thursday of the Third Week of Lent – Day 20

Jeremiah 7:23-28

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Luke 11:14-23

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Psalm 95:8

Today, we encounter a very familiar Gospel that we often hear outside the Lenten Season. Jesus, who is accused of being aligned with Satan, shoots down the notion that he is working on the dark side of the force. Rather he speaks the truth about two aspects of the Christian life which are essential in our understanding of our journey this Lent.

First, division. Jesus speaks to the crowd about division after he heals the deaf mute. Division is the root cause for something failing or being unable to succeed. We ourselves understand division. After all, we live in a world and a country that is evenly divided. We call it politics or philosophies on how to run a government, but, in reality, these divisions keep us from truly working together for the common good. Some of us experience divisions in our households and among our friends. We understand that as long as there is division nothing good can come from the pain we experience when parents don't talk to their children or siblings despise each other. Division only brings out the real culprit which is sin itself.

Secondly, unity. If division is the source of our sinfulness, unity can help overcome division and help us live in peace with one another. In order for "true" unity to be established, both sides must work together by putting pain, hurt, and philosophies aside. This is exactly what Jesus means when he states, *"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."*

For us as Catholics during this Lenten Season, sin is at the root of divisions, and living the Christian life, especially sacramentally, is the path to unity. On this day, which is halfway through Lent, ask yourself a question. Do your sins cause division in your home, place of work, and community? Now is the time to truly use the Sacraments of the Church, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist, to be united not only to Christ but with those around you.

Daily Challenge

Review your conscience and see what sins may cause division and pain in your life. Seek the Sacrament of Reconciliation this weekend, and read the entire Psalm 95 once again.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Lenten Prayer

O Lord, I come to You with a heart that desires to be united with Your son in all things. Help me to turn away from my sins and be an instrument of unity and peace for those around me.
THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 13, 2026 – Friday of the Third Week of Lent – Day 21

*Hosea 14:2-10 Psalm 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17
Mark 12:28-34*

***And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding,
he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."***

Mark 12:34

If yesterday's readings were focused on division and unity, the theme of today's reading is bearing fruit and true understanding.

The theme of bearing fruit in this life is heard not just in the Lenten Season or on the 3rd Sunday of Lent in Cycle C, but it is often a theme of Jesus' preaching and ministry. As a Christian, bearing fruit manifests itself in keeping the commandments. We bear fruit when we live the commandments as they were intended as the wise scribe understood in today's Gospel reading. Bearing fruit can also be living out the spiritual and corporal works of mercy or perfecting the precepts of the Church. But there has to be something more. All of us can check a box in our spiritual lives and state, "done and completed." The fruit is born, good works have been done, but there has to be something more than just bearing fruit. It comes in the second to last line in today's Gospel, "*And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, 'You are not far from the Kingdom of God.'*"

Understanding that the root of division in our lives is our sinfulness, understanding that unity comes from Christ, and understanding that at the core of following the two greatest

commandments is the Kingdom of God. Look inwardly today and ask yourself a question, “Do I live my faith with true understanding?” There is still time in this Lenten Season to get back on track. Now is the acceptable time; now is the acceptable hour.

Daily Challenge

Review both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In the remaining days of Lent, add one of these to your daily Lenten practices. Make plans to go to confession.

Lenten Prayer

Dear Lord, I am a sinner and deserve nothing, but I humbly seek your forgiveness and mercy so that I may work to end divisions in my life, create unity centered around the sacraments of your Son, and bear fruit by faithfully following your commandments. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 14, 2026 – Saturday of the Third Week of Lent – Day 22

Hosea 6:1-6 Psalm 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab Luke 18:9-14

O God, be merciful to me a sinner. Luke 18:13

I love today's Gospel reading. Like so many of our Gospels, we hear this this one in all the Liturgical seasons; it is not simply reserved for Lent to hear these words. On this Saturday, before the 4th Sunday of Lent, I offer you three brief reflections. Our Lenten season will change after Sunday, so it is important that we understand where we started and where we are on day 22.

A Pharisee: Every time I read this Gospel, I can't imagine anyone speaking to our Lord like this guy. Yet, I imagine that there are some who do. People who are so absorbed with themselves, maybe. But the pharisee, to his credit, checked all the boxes and followed the letter of the law. In his mind, and perhaps in his heart, he felt entitled to say those words, *"I am not like him."* The Pharisee spoke so many words.

A Tax Collector: With the Pharisee, it was all words; with the sinful tax collector, it was all action: quiet and deliberate. He knew he was unworthy to be in the presence of the Lord and maybe even the Pharisee, but his brief words, *"Be merciful to me a sinner"* summed up what was happening in that temple.

A Contrite Heart: The acclamation before the Gospel says, *"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."*

What our God wants, what Jesus wants, is simply a contrite heart open to His mercy and forgiveness. Do our actions and

thoughts reflect more of the Pharisee or the tax collector. Now is the time to truly evaluate where we are in this Lenten season. Our objective is a heart pure and true. Make that your goal for the remaining Lenten season.

Daily Challenge

The responsorial psalm today is the same as it was on Ash Wednesday, which is the 51st Psalm. Open your scriptures and read the psalm again. Focus again on the phrase, *“thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.”* Ask for strength to be more like the tax collector with less words, more action. When you finish, say a prayer of Thanksgiving.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, create a true contrite heart within me. May I never lose sight of the mercy and forgiveness I need from You. Wash me clean of my sins and open my eyes to the realities of the blessings which You have given to me in this life. In them, I am truly blessed. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 15, 2026 – Fourth Sunday of Lent – The Man born blind

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Ephesians 5:8-14

Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

John 9:1-41

Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them. John 9:11

When I was younger, I loved the fall season: the changing of the trees, the vibrant colors, the smell of the cool crisp air, and watching the summer fade into a season of dormancy. That was when I was younger. Now, I enjoy spring so much more. The days are longer, all living things come back to life, and we are reminded that death is not forever. This year Easter falls at a perfect time for the climate in Arkansas. The colors outside match what we are celebrating.

But right now, look around, and see the signs of spring on the ground, in the trees, the birds, the air. Out of the dead of winter, spring breaks forth. It's perfect for this 4th Sunday of Lent. We see signs that winter is slowly but surely being conquered by spring. Our readings of this Lenten Sunday reflect this as well. Light will soon rule the day. But as we move into these last weeks of Lent, I offer you these thoughts:

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT. From Ash Wednesday until now, has our Lenten journey caused us to want nothing but the Lord? After all, is He our Shepherd? Have our acts of penitence and charity brought us to an understanding that the Lord and only the Lord brings us to greener pastures? Is there enough light in our life to realize this?

TAKE NO PART IN FRUITLESS WORKS OF DARKNESS. Saint Paul commands the Church of Ephesus to refrain from works of darkness. Do we? Have we? Do we prefer darkness or light? What

do our works reflect; the Lord or ourselves? Is there enough light in our lives to realize this?

I DO BELIEVE LORD. The statement the man who was born blind made to Christ is the statement that Christ wants to hear from all of us. I do believe Lord. We know it has nothing to do with physical blindness. Yes, Lord, I believe. My heart burns for You. My mind desires only You. My soul longs for You. Is there enough light in our lives to realize this?

Have we understood what Jesus has been saying to us throughout this Lenten Season? What have we learned from Jesus? That even alone in our desert, we can overcome sin. That our eyes are to be fixed on Him. That He is the only one who can cleanse us. He is the one who is our light, our shepherd. But, for us, we must be willing to walk in the light of God to come to these conclusions. Is there enough light in our lives to realize this?

Spring and the beauty of the sun's light is upon us. The sounds and smells of God's creation fill our world as a reminder to us that death is not forever. Will we experience the light? Are we ready for spring inside us? Is there enough light in our lives to realize this and to say, "Yes Lord, I do believe."?

Daily Challenge

Take a walk outside today, and observe what is happening in nature. Every year like clockwork, life begins anew. Make a list of your sins that prevent true light from entering your life and seek the sacrament of reconciliation this week.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I ask You to open my eyes to a more vibrant and profound faith. Help me to realize my unbelief and inability to see You in all things. Shepherd me through the dark times and guide me with Your light, so I may one day enter Your kingdom rejoicing. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 16, 2026 – Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent – Day 23

Isaiah 65:17-21

Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b

John 4:43-54

***Seek good and not evil so that you may live, and the LORD
will be with you. Amos 5:14***

In today's Gospel, Jesus returns to Galilee for the first time after the wedding at Cana and his first miracle. Jesus performs his second miracle or sign: the healing of a royal official's son who was ill. Unlike the man born blind we read about in yesterday's Gospel, there was no touching or laying on of hands. Just a simple command, *"You may go; your son will live."* Like the man born blind, a healing took place. One received his sight; the other's son was healed. Today's Gospel continues the theme of light over darkness. The light being the "light" of faith that illuminates one's heart in the presence of Jesus or hearing His words or receiving a command. The blind man spread the message of Christ, the royal official and his family became believers and followers of Christ.

On this Monday of the 4th week of Lent. Are you in need of a healing touch? Are your eyes open to faith? Do you believe enough in Jesus to follow his command without reservation?

Daily Challenge

- 1) Read the Gospel story again.
- 2) Spend 10 minutes in silent reflection on "unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe."
- 3) Answer the question honestly, "Is that you?" Or are you more like the royal official?
- 4) Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of faith.

Lenten Prayer

(Closing Prayer from the 4th Sunday of Lent)

O God, who through Your Word reconcile the human race to Yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 17, 2026 – Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent – Day 24

(St Patrick's Day)

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12 Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9 John 5:1-16

A clean heart create for me, O God; give me back the joy of your salvation. Psalm 51

As we continue in this 4th week of Lent, the paschal mystery themes are coming together almost every day. Water is the theme once again this weekday. It's not the Samaritan woman or even the water of the pool at Hebrew Bethesda that heals the cripple, but the words that came forth from the mouth of Jesus, *"Rise, take up your mat, and walk."* Sometimes we get busy looking for true healing and forgiveness in the wrong places.

Today we celebrate St. Patrick's day. St. Patrick is a powerful example of faith, courage, and perseverance. He understood the notion of picking up his mat by going back to Ireland to minister to the people who once took him captive years before. Remember that God's calling often comes in unexpected ways. He calls us to be instruments of peace, hope, and healing in the world around us, just as St. Patrick was in Ireland. May his example inspire us to boldly live out our faith and trust in God's plan for our lives. May it help us to look for healing and forgiveness in the right place.

Daily Challenge

Like a lucky 4 leaf clover, pray 4 times today:

1. Pray for the people who need healing especially those who can't walk.

2. Pray for those who are thirsty and need more fresh water to drink.
3. Pray for those who are taken captive against their will and ask for their safe return home.
4. Pray for all missionaries who travel to foreign lands and proclaim the Gospel.

Lenten Prayer

May Your healing work, O Lord, free us from doing evil and lead us to what is right. Grant that we who commemorate the feast of Saint Patrick may experience the protection of his prayers and, through his example, live more faithfully in service to You. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 18, 2026 – Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent – Day 25

Isaiah 49:8-15 Psalm 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18 John 5:17-30

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; whoever believes in me will never die. John 11: 25

I have two thoughts to focus on for day 25 of this Lenten season as we quickly approach completing 2/3 of our journey. First, Jesus' unity with his Father. Second, Jesus's testimony which comes at the end of this passage today.

Unity: In the first verses of the passage, Jesus declares that his actions and works are not his own but those of the Father. When Jesus says, "*My Father is working until now, and I am working,*" He is asserting his equality with God.

How often do we acknowledge that everything we do is part of God's plan? Jesus shows us that we are to work in harmony with God's will, allowing him to be the source of our actions and decisions. In times of difficulty, remembering that we are not working alone, but with the Father, can bring us peace and clarity.

Testimony: "*I can do nothing on my own.*" Jesus' perfect submission to the will of the Father is a model for us. Jesus teaches us the importance of humility and submission to God's will. It reminds us that, like Jesus, we must not seek our own will, but the will of God in our lives. This can be challenging, especially when our own desires conflict with what God asks of us, but trusting in his plan brings us true peace and fulfillment.

In what ways are you united with our Heavenly Father? In what ways do you submit to the will of God in your daily life?

Daily Challenge

Pray a Rosary today; the Glorious mysteries. After praying the Rosary, reflect on how God has worked good things in your life.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, today I turn my myself over to You. I offer my heart, that it may burn for You and You alone. I offer You my soul, that it seeks nothing but to be in Your presence. I offer You my strength, that all of it may go towards defending what is good and just. I offer You my mind, that I think of You and You alone in my life. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 19, 2026 – Solemnity of St Joseph, Husband of Mary – Day 26

(Patron of St Joseph Parish)

*2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16 Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22 Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a*

***The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your
wife into your home.” Matt 1:20***

St Joseph has always been a favorite saint of mine because of my father and grandfather. Never a meal, drive, or day went by that we did not hear my father say, *“Saint Joseph, pray for us.”* And we all would respond, *“Pray for us.”*

Here we are in the middle of Lent celebrating our patron’s feast day. It is Solemnity, so you break your Lenten practices for this day. It still counts as one of the 40 days of Lent, but with a little more joy, as we honor our patron.

I love Saint Joseph for two reasons. One, his obedience to God. He can teach all of us how to live the Christian life by his simple but yet forceful, *“Yes, Lord.”* Two, he never says a word. Our Blessed Mother speaks a few words in Scripture, but Joseph not a word. Such a wonderful testimony to how to follow the will of God. It gives new meaning to the phrase, *“Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”* On this Solemnity, our feast day, are you ready to say yes to the Lord, without a word and only listening with your heart?

Daily Challenge

Wish fellow parishioners a happy feast day with joy and take a walk and enjoy a spring day.

Lenten Prayer

I found this prayer on the internet. I think it both beautiful and simple.

“O Saint Joseph, you who were the faithful and loving spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the earthly father of Jesus, we ask for your intercession and guidance. Protect our families, guide us in our daily work, and help us to grow in holiness. Be our patron in times of difficulty, and help us to trust in God's plan for our lives. We ask that you intercede for us, that we may experience peace, joy, and the grace to follow God's will.” Saint Joseph, pray for us. **Amen.**

March 20, 2026 – Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent – Day 27

*Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22 Psalm 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23
John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30*

***One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.***

Matt 4:4b

Imagine for a second living your daily life knowing that someone wanted to harm you or even kill you. Towards the end of Jesus' ministry, He lived with that reality each and every day. In today's Gospel, we understand that this was Jesus' reality. They were trying to kill Him because He said He was the Christ.

In life, you and I must make a choice each and every day. We must decide to do the good or the bad, to live for Christ or to not live for Him, to be compassionate or not, and so forth. In honesty, we make the decision in a matter of seconds each day. The difficulty comes in making the wrong choice. We think that we are doing right when in truth we are doing something wrong. The wicked, for example, in the first reading thought they were in the right. In the Gospel, it was the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In the end, our actions must be in line with what Christ wants. The Lord was close to those in need. Are we? The Lord knew what his heavenly father wanted. Do we? The Lord was willing to do whatever was necessary to proclaim the Gospel. Are we?

The last line of today's Gospel mentions that Jesus's hour had not yet come. Since we do not know our last hour, are we wicked or are we good?

Daily Challenge

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.” The psalmist proclaims. On this day, look at your life, your friendships, your family, a stranger, perhaps. Is there some way today to be able to reach out to someone in need and do the good?

Lenten Prayer

O God, give me the strength to turn away from sin, so as to live my life for You. Grant me the courage to live this very day and hour for You, so that I may be a light to those who need Your presence. As I approach the time of Your passion and death, may I be willing to die with You, so as to live with You for all eternity. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 21, 2026 – Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent – Day 28

Jeremiah 11:18-20 Psalm 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12
John 7:40-53

O Lord, my God, in You I take refuge. Psalm 7:2a

We are now on the cusp of beginning passion week followed by Holy Week. Things are changing. When you enter church this weekend, the Holy Water container will be absent and there will be no Holy Water in the fonts by the doors. Traditionally, this week many churches would cover their statues in purple cloth. As a little child, I thought it odd that the church would be covering up that which they wanted us to center on which is the cross of Jesus Christ. Enough on this, now to my reflection.

Division. We are so divided in our world, county, community, church, and family. Life just seems to offer us one more thing each day in which we all can take sides and hate each other. It was no different in Jesus' time. In today's Gospel, the division was directly related to Christ. Was he a prophet? Could he be the Christ? At the end of the Gospel, they each go to their home (camp) because they could not believe who he really was.

On this day, answer the question for yourself. Who is Christ for you? Are you content to just go to your home, or are you willing to encounter rejection, anger, and loss for the sake of the Gospel?

You need to decide quickly because the celebration of the Paschal mysteries is right around the corner. You don't want to be lukewarm.

Daily Challenge

Offer a prayer today for those who suffer for speaking and proclaiming the truth: our missionaries around the world proclaiming the Gospel message. Pray for an end to your divided heart and plan to go to confession.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, I ask You this day to help me not live a divided life but one that is totally dedicated to You. Give me the grace and forgiveness not to retreat to my side of the argument but to live the truth, proclaim the truth, and offer the truth to all I encounter by my actions. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 22, 2026 – Fifth Sunday of Lent – The Raising of Lazarus

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

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." John 11:27

Jesus says, *"I am the resurrection & the life."* Do you believe this? Martha replies, *"Yes Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ."* These are powerful words spoken by a woman named Martha. But in reality, these words should be uttered on every heart and tongue of every believer throughout the world.

On this 5th Sunday of Lent, we read the Gospel of the resurrection of Lazarus. We understand where Martha is coming from. Like her, when called to believe, we can say "yes" when we need one more miracle in our life. From Jesus' perspective this was one final miracle, one final show of God's power before his passion. Will they believe? Will they understand? So, Jesus turns to us and says, do you believe this?

Over the past three weeks our Gospel readings have all pointed to Jesus through the gifts he offered: living water, sight to the blind man, new life to Lazarus. But that is only the surface. So many in the crowds wanted the same thing: the Pharisees, scribes, those of little faith. Think of those Gospels again; behind each apparent gift that is offered was a desire for them to come to faith and to receive this gift with joy. Each found faith, which was so much more important than what Jesus did for them. After all, no water can quench for all eternity, sight may go bad again, Lazarus would die again. Do we understand this?

Faith is the real gift. Look carefully again at all three Gospels. Coming to faith is the key and the proclamation, "*You are the Christ, the Son of God.*" The real desire of Jesus is to bring alive the faith that was inside of each of them and that is within each of us. However, many of the Jews that followed Jesus were not convinced, and Jesus became perturbed because they did not quite understand this.

Where do we stand? Lent is about turning away from selfishness, sin, and personal desires. How have we accomplished this? Have we resisted temptation like Jesus in the desert? Have we focused on Jesus in all things in our life and seen only Him in all things? Do we thirst for more than what is before our eyes and bodies? Do we want to see with more than just our eyes? Do we have the desire for eternity with God? All of this is key in understanding what Jesus desires of us: the gift of faith!!

Jesus says, "*I am the resurrection & the life.*" Do you believe this? Martha replies, "*Yes Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ.*" The Blind man; the Samaritan woman; and on that mountain, Peter, James and John all said this, as well. Yes, Lord, I do believe. What about you?

Daily Challenge

This passion week, reread the last three Sunday Gospels. What does water mean to you? What does light mean to you? What does "rising" mean to you? Look for the connection with these themes and the Paschal Mystery.

Lenten Prayer

O Lord, help me to prepare worthily for the upcoming festivities of Your suffering, death, and resurrection. Wash me clean of my sins, open my eyes to Your presence in my daily life, and grant me understanding that in dying for You, I will rise with you. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 23, 2026 – Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent – Day 29

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

Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

John 8:1-11

*Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for You
are at my side.* Psalm 23:4ab

As we begin this last week before Holy Week, we encounter the woman who committed adultery and is brought before Jesus by the scribes, Pharisees, and elders, and, of course, the two devious elders who accuse Suzanna of adultery. What does adultery have to do with where we are in this Lenten Season? Well, perhaps it calls on us to reflect on how quickly we can judge one another. Maybe it is calling us to practice mercy and forgiveness like Jesus. Or, maybe, to use reason like Daniel in looking at situations differently. With only days now before we begin the celebration of the Paschal Mysteries, we are still sinners. I suspect that not many of us are ready for Easter on April 5th because our Lent has been less than stellar.

Maybe today is the perfect day to start working on compassion and mercy. Seek that mercy from our Heavenly Father, and give that mercy to those around you. It will help you to live as a child of the light.

Now is the appropriate time; now is the appropriate hour.

Daily Challenge

Reflect on the psalm today. How does our Shepherd help you to see the light, to live in the light, and to bear the light?

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me this day to follow You faithfully by walking in the light of each and every day You provide me. Give me the strength to follow Your commandments and to live the truth of our faith in the light of day. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 24, 2026 – Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent – Day 30

Numbers 21:4-9 Psalm 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21 John 8:21-30

***The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone,
because I always do what is pleasing to him.*** John 8:30

As we move closer to the celebrating the Paschal Mysteries, on day 30, we might have thought we should identify solely with the Christ, the God-man who is suffering: his pain, his passion, and death. While that is essential as we enter these most holy weeks and days, we must not forget the Christ is from above. This passage is from John's Farewell Discourse. In some ways, it challenges us to examine our own lives: Are we, like the Pharisees, too focused on our own ideas and beliefs, or are we willing to open ourselves to the fullness of Christ's revelation? How can we grow in belief, and how can we help others come to know Jesus as the "I AM"?

One way is to focus even more on the Eucharist which is the center of our lives. In this gift from Heaven we see the Lord's suffering and passion made present, we are connected to Heaven from which Christ came. Do you believe this? Do you understand this? In order to enter into the Paschal Mysteries, we must understand the great "I AM." During Jesus' ministry, in the early church and through the centuries after the death and resurrection of Christ, so many of us fail to understand the fullness of God's revelation to us. Today, the Church, through the scriptures and the Eucharist, invites us into a deeper encounter with the person of Jesus. We are called to move beyond surface-level understandings and into a transformative relationship with the one who is "from above."

Daily Challenge

Answer the following questions:

- Who is Jesus to you? How does that relationship affect your understanding of his passion and death?
- In what part of the Eucharist do you understand more completely the relationship between the Father and the Son?
- What do you need to do in your life to enter into a deeper relationship with the God-man Jesus Christ?

Lenten Prayer

O God, thank You for the opportunity to know Your only beloved Son. Open my heart so that I can deepen my faith in Him who is my Savior, my Lord, and my God. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 25, 2026 – Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord – Day 31

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10

Psalm 40:7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11

Hebrews 10:4-10

Luke 1:26-38

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Luke 1:38

Today marks one of the rare occasions in the Lenten Season in which a solemnity is celebrated. St Joseph’s Day is the other. This day marks three months since the last Christmas and nine months to Christmas this year. It’s the Church’s way of telling us that even in this penitential season, there is still time to rejoice and we can never forget the incarnation of Christ.

The Annunciation teaches us 4 principles about our relationship with God.

- 1) Be Faithful and Trust. Look at Mary as the model for us when it comes to her faithfulness and trust in God. Her “yes” is an act of trust. Do you trust in God enough to say “yes” even without knowing what you are called to do?
- 2) God is always present in our lives. The Incarnation itself reveals that God loves us so much he became one like us. Do you know and feel God’s presence in your life this Lenten Season?
- 3) Mary is our Intercessor. Even in the middle of this Lenten Season when this day points to Christmas, we are reminded that our Blessed Mother is our greatest intercessor. Having difficulties this Lent drawing close to God? Have you asked for her intercessions?

- 4) Answer the Lord. As Mary said “yes”, these 40 days of Lent are nothing more than saying “yes” to God 40 days in a row. Have you?

Daily Challenge

Pray the Rosary today (Glorious Mysteries) and ask our Blessed Mother to help you this Lent. Be kind to yourself today and do something you like. You can...it’s a solemnity.

Lenten Prayer

(from the collect at Mass today)

O God, who willed that Your Word should take on the reality of human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, that we, who confess our Redeemer to be God and Man, may merit to become partakers even in His divine nature. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

March 26, 2026 – Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent – Day 32

Genesis 17:3-9 Psalm 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9 John 8:51-59

The Lord remembers his covenant forever. Psalm 105:8a

We are drawing closer and closer to Holy Week. Jesus is becoming bolder with his pronouncements, but it puts him in more danger with those who don't believe in him. Today, as we reflect on this passage, we are challenged to examine our own faith. Do we truly recognize Jesus as the eternal Son of God; the one who existed before time and who holds the key to eternal life? Are we willing to let go of our own limited understanding and embrace the mystery of who Jesus is? This passage invites us to move beyond a shallow understanding of Jesus and to enter into a deeper, more profound relationship with Him, one that acknowledges his divinity and his role as the giver of life.

The question for today is are we ready to accept this and, when you hear his voice, harden not your heart?

Daily Challenge

Reflect on the “spiritual” works of mercy today and act on one before the end of this day.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, give me the grace to recognize Your Son in His full divinity, to accept His invitation to eternal life, and to live out that life with faith, hope, and love. May my heart be open to the eternal “I AM,” who is with me now and forever. Amen. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 27, 2026 – Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent – Day 33

Jeremiah 20:10-13 Psalm 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7 John 10:31-42

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life; you have the words of everlasting life. John 6:63c, 68c

Today's Gospel passage offers a glimpse into the reality around the time of Jesus' passion and death. By the end of his ministry, many were ready to stone him for blasphemy, yet others came to believe in him because he spoke the truth.

At times, we have those same conflicts in our life that make some decisions very difficult to make. We are conflicted with our emotions, our thoughts, and sometimes our allegiances. We are days away from the beginning of Holy Week. It's time to look and see if all of our Lenten practices and devotions have brought us closer to the Lord. Now is the appropriate time; now is the appropriate hour.

Today, Jesus speaks of the good works he has done, yet that is not enough for some to believe. The good works the Lord has done for us are too numerous to list, but, suffice to say on this day, we encounter a loving, kind, and forgiving Lord. He wants us to know the Father through his ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection. Everything about Him is and was true. Do you believe this?

Daily Challenge

Reflect on the "corporal" works of mercy today and act on one before the end of this day.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, help my unbelief. Give me the grace to see in Your Son the 'good' He has done for me and the world. Allow me to enter Holy Week with a contrite and open heart ready to die with Your Son, so as to rise with Him. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 28, 2026 – Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent – Day 34

Ezekiel 37:21-28 Jeremiah 31:10, 11-12abcd, 13 John 11:45-56

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

We start Holy Week this evening with the Vigil Mass for Passion/Palm Sunday. In the readings today, the divisions are clear and the stage is set for the passion narrative. Some believe; some don't. This is what we experience in anything in life. Some don't even believe that the sky is blue, divisions run so deep. It was the same at the time of Jesus. Those who were against made their decisions out of fear they would lose their land, property, livelihood, and authority.

We are the same. We might love Jesus, but often the fear of losing everything makes us back off from fully supporting our God, our Lord Jesus, our Church, and its leaders. What about you today? What are you afraid of that would prevent you from fully letting go and living for God alone? No 40 days of Lent will change that, no fasting or almsgiving. We are back to where we started, in the desert with the devil and we have a choice to make. His temptations are powerful. Now is the appropriate day. Now is the appropriate hour to say to the Lord, I believe You with my whole heart, soul, mind, and being...and mean it.

Daily Challenge

List your Lenten practices you did this Lent whether you did something or gave something up or something else. How successful were you in keeping faithful to them? Either way, offer a prayer of Thanksgiving for what you have received and the strength to say, "I believe."

Lenten Prayer

O God, on this Lenten day, I ask You to give me the strength to do Your will in my life. Grant me the grace to be called a worthy child of God and the forgiveness necessary to walk as one.

THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

March 29, 2026 – Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Isaiah 50:4-7 Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 22-23
Philippians 2:6-11 Matthew 26:14 – 27:66

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Psalm
22:2a

Today, we begin Holy Week. We are challenged to look deep within ourselves. We are asked to reflect and to think about something that changed our lives forever: the pain and suffering and death of Jesus.

Jesus' *pain* was more than physical. It was a rejection of his message. His disciples often gave into sin and temptation. For these reasons, his pain was great. But, his pain was for us. On the other hand, we talk about our pains and the things which hurt us, but nothing can compare to the pain Christ experienced. This week we need to offer our pain for Christ.

Jesus suffering was because of our selfishness, our sin, our doubt, our lack of trust, and our insufficient love. He suffered willingly for us, all of us. When we talk about our sufferings, many times all we want is pity. But, we deserve our suffering. Jesus did not. This week, we need to offer our suffering up for Christ.

Jesus' death on the Cross was a true crime. His death was violent, humiliating, and unjust. Yet, he did it with an open heart. Most of us never even think about our death. Don't talk to me about death. I am not ready. We deserve to die, but Jesus

did not. This week, we need to reflect on Christ's death and what He did for us.

This Holy Week, we have the chance to think about Jesus' pain, suffering, and death. It is time to put aside any bit of selfishness we have that says, "Look at me!" It is time to look at Jesus, our eyes focused on him. When we do, we see that through our own passion Jesus is one with us. If he died, so must we. We must die to self!

When it comes to our pain, suffering, and death--we all can tell stories. Jesus' pain, suffering, and death--it is our story and our salvation. During this week, if we can truly die to self and identify fully with our suffering Savior, what a blessed Easter it will for be us!

Daily Challenge

Re-read the Passion Narrative again, but focus only on the words of Jesus. What is he saying to you on Palm Sunday?

Lenten Prayer

(from the Collect {Opening Prayer} at Mass)

Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed His lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in His Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

March 30, 2026 – Monday of Holy Week – Day 35

Isaiah 42:1-7 Psalm 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14 John 12:1-11

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Psalm 27:1a

There are three days after Palm Sunday and before we begin the celebration of the Paschal Triduum. The Gospel comes from the passion narratives and gives us a hint of what is to come. In some ways, the Gospels are sad. Today's, for example, have many Jews turning away from him. Yes, out of fear. Yes, out of ignorance and selfishness. I challenge you over the next three days to prepare yourselves for the Pascal Triduum by walking with Christ.

We are called to examine the way we love Jesus, especially in our daily lives, by offering our very best to the Lord, giving freely and joyfully, and knowing that our love for him is never in vain. Recognize that Jesus, who gave everything for us, invites us into that same sacrificial love. May we pour out our hearts in worship, gratitude, and service so that the fragrance of our love for Him might fill the world.

Daily Challenge

Today pray for all those who are accused of a crime, yet are innocent. Maybe they are political prisoners or simply at the wrong place at the wrong time. Pray that justice is done, and they are released without harm.

Lenten Prayer

Heavenly Father, give me the grace and the strength to always follow You. Forgive me of my sinfulness and my weakness so I may walk with You. Give me the courage to carry my cross and proclaim the message of salvation by words and actions.

THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.

March 31, 2026 – Tuesday of Holy Week – Day 36

*Isaiah 49:1-6 Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 and 17 John
13:21-33, 36-38*

“So,” Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” John 13:7

Betrayal, denial, fear, greed, and uncertainty. All this plays out in today’s Gospel, a passage from the passion narrative according to St John. The Gospel of today continues to prepare us for the Paschal Triduum. But in some ways, the basic reasons that Jesus is turned over to the authorities is on full display at the last supper. It is Judas, with his betrayal, greed, and uncertainty about whom Jesus is that sets everything in motion. The other disciples in some ways are confused and scared. Peter even promised Jesus, I will not deny. I will never do that.

If we look inside of ourselves, we can see the Judas, John, Peter, or any of the other scared disciples inside of us just wanting to understand what is going on. When life gets hard, or we feel we are being spiritually beaten down, we experience uncertainty, which could lead to the same things the Apostles were experiencing at the time of Jesus’ passion.

As we approach the Holy Days this week, do you desire to cleanse yourself of the things that get in the way of your relationship with Christ and truly walk with him?

Daily Challenge

Pray for those today who are conflicted, feel betrayed, and are uncertain in life's decisions. Pray the Lord offers them peace and clarity of heart and mind.

Lenten Prayer

O God, I ask You to help me to put doubt, uncertainty, and fear behind me as I desire to identify with Your Son's passion and death. Grant me the grace to live a life worthy of my discipleship, not simply this week, but all the days of my life. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. **Amen.**

April 1, 2026 – Wednesday of Holy Week – Day 37

*Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34
Matthew 26:14-25*

Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so." Matt 26:25

Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so." Every year since I have been a priest, the last words of Jesus before we begin the Paschal Triduum are "You have said so." For me, they are sad words. Jesus' ministry, his calling of the Apostles, his teaching, his parables, his miracles, his healings, and his forgiving words are reduced to one man who betrayed our Lord and Jesus affirming his guilt.

We are truly guilty of sinning, of not listening to the voice of God, of being unreceptive to his forgiveness and mercy. We are guilty of pride, self-righteousness, and envy. We are Judas, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Elders, the Jews, the crowds, and the unbelievers. We can't escape who we are. We try, but fail. We tried to use these almost 40 days of Lent to turn ourselves and at least be the beloved disciples, but we wind up back in the part of Judas. Our words sometime mimic that of Peter's proclamation, "Lord, I will never deny you." But we know our words and actions accuse us of exactly that: a denial that our Lord is truly the Lord of our life. Look at our sinfulness, our refusal to help our neighbor in need, to forgive someone who has hurt us, and to make our lives the center of happiness.

There is really nothing left to say after Jesus' condemnation of Judas, but to say from the deepest levels of our heart, "*Have mercy on me Lord, a sinner.*"

Daily Challenge

Make a list of the sins that have caused you most harm. Look at the crucifix in your home or at church and seek forgiveness and mercy and compassion from our Lord by saying, "Have mercy on me, O God, a sinner." Pray for the Church, and everyone preparing for these Holy Days. Plan to attend the Paschal Triduum services.

Lenten Prayer

From the closing prayer at Mass this day:

Endow us, almighty God, with a firm conviction that through Your Son's death in time, to which the revered mysteries bear witness, we may be assured of perpetual life. **THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.**

April 2, 2026 – Holy Thursday – Day 38

Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 John 13:1-15

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ. 1

Cor 10:16

There is something very beautiful about this night. Jesus sits down with his disciples, shares a Passover meal, and offers them something wonderful and new in its place. Even though the disciples are really unaware of what Jesus has given them, it would be a night that they would remember forever. There is also something very sad about this night. For even though Jesus had given his disciples the best gift of all, he would be betrayed by one of them, and this would be the last meal he would share with them. In the midst of the joy of sharing this meal, there was agony, anguish, and doubt in the heart of Jesus. Could everything I worked for be coming to an end? As we share this meal together, there is much to learn about Jesus who feeds us and desires for us. In the joy of this Eucharist, there is sadness, too. It is because of our failing that Jesus died for us. What is Jesus teaching us at this supper?

It was a simple act of humility to wash the feet of another. The disciples were not happy that their master was going to wash their feet. *After all, it should be me, Lord, that washes your feet.*

But, he did wash the feet of his Apostles to show them that this was their model of being teacher and master. The reason is not only that the Apostles were to be servant-disciples, but they were to be different than those who came before them. The message of the Gospel had to not only be believed, but embraced and lived. The washing of the feet was a confirmation, then, of the word that they professed and would

teach them that the Eucharist was essential to them, if they were going to carry out the message of being servant to all.

On this most Holy Night, the words, “*this is my Body and this is my Blood*” have special meaning to us. We hear them every single day at Mass; yet, they originate on this day from Jesus who was about to suffer and die for us. In other words, every time we hear them, we should remember exactly what Jesus was doing. Offering us a new covenant, not an old covenant in which we only know of a God who is faithful, but a new covenant in which our God comes to us to strengthen us, feed us, and forgive us at every moment of our lives.

This night is a reminder to us that this Eucharistic meal is more than just a memory of what transpired over 2000 years ago. It is a living memorial, for at this and every Eucharist, Jesus comes to us and reminds us of what he did for us. His agony and anguish remind us that in our own sufferings, pain, and doubts, the Lord Jesus points us to victory over sin and death. This living memorial is Jesus present with us and in his Church each of every moment of our lives.

There is a challenge for us on this very beautiful, yet sad night. It comes from Jesus himself if you have listened to scriptures tonight: *I want you to serve one another. I want you to love one another. I want you to eat and drink of my body and blood and proclaim the death and resurrection of the Lord until I return again in glory.*

On this Holy Night of mixed emotions, now is the time to recognize all the things Christ has done for us. Our lives, our faith, our joys, and our sufferings have never been about us. They have always been about the Jesus we celebrate tonight--in word, service, and sacrament.

Daily Challenge

Today is a day of service. Find some way to carry out an act of service for another—a statement that says you can be a servant

of all. If it is hard to accomplish today, complete it by Saturday afternoon.

Lenten Prayer

From the Opening Collect at Mass:

Almighty ever-living God, who has called us to participate in this most sacred Supper, in which Your only Begotten Son, when about to hand Himself over to death, entrusted to the Church a sacrifice new for all eternity, the banquet of His love: grant, we pray, that we may draw from so great a mystery the fullness of charity and of life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

April 3, 2026 – Good Friday – Day 39

Friday of the Passion of the Lord

*Isaiah 52:13—53:12 Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 John 18:1—19:42*

*When Jesus had taken the wine, he said,
“It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the
spirit. John 19:30*

Today is Good Friday. On this day, Jesus speaks to us through his passion. His words are meant for us.

- *Who are you looking for?* I am he, says Jesus. But, even with Jesus right in front of us, we still look elsewhere. We have sinned.
- *I came to the world to testify to the truth.* We say we value truth. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Often, we prefer some other truth. We have sinned.
- *I Thirst.* Jesus thirsts not for a drink. He spits it out. He thirsts for our hearts, our souls, our lives. He thirsts that we know the Father and come to believe. We often thirst for something other than Christ. We have sinned.
- *It is finished.* For Christ, everything was for us. In his death, he gave everything to us. It is complete, yet so sad. It seemed as though truth died. Compassion was hung. Love was conquered. He died for us. He said those words, and so, we have sinned.

Our Savior gave us everything. He only asked us to respond to His love. His death shows us how much He loved us. On this day, Jesus simply wants our lives. So often, we do not let Him in; our lives are our lives. And so, Jesus died on the cross, and we have sinned.

Daily Challenge

Spend 30 minutes in silent prayer today, perhaps in an isolated spot in your home, or at church, or walking your neighborhood. No iPhones, talking, reading, or companionship--simply alone and silent with the Lord.

Lenten Prayer

From the solemn blessing at the service:

May abundant blessing, O Lord, we pray, come down upon Your people, who have honored the death of Your Son in the hope of their resurrection: may pardon come, comfort be given, holy faith increase, and everlasting redemption be made secure. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

April 4, 2026 – Holy Saturday – Day 40

THE DAY HOURS

Day two of the Triduum begins with sundown on Friday and continues to sundown on Saturday. On this most holy day, I offer this quick reflection:

A day of waiting and stillness. Like preparing for Christmas, Holy Saturday day time is almost like the hours right before the Vigil Mass for Christmas. Everything you could have done to prepare for the day is done; all that is left to do is begin the celebration with joy. Instead of last-minute wrapping of gifts or cooking, use these daylight hours to be still, wait in silence, and let the Lord speak to your heart.

A day of mourning. These quiet hours before sundown are also a time of mourning. Yesterday, we remembered Jesus' death on the cross, and we are still waiting and hoping, but with mourning and tears. We are not mourning that Christ died yesterday, but our mourning is that even after 40 days, we were unable to rid ourselves of our sinfulness, and we still need his grace, mercy, and forgiveness. For this, we mourn. Now is truly the hour of acceptance. ***Have mercy on me, O Lord, a sinner.*** Reflect on that phrase quietly this day.

THE EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT

Old Testament

- 1) Genesis 1:1—2:2
 - a. Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35
- 2) Genesis 22:1-18
 - a. Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11
- 3) Exodus 14:15—15:1
 - a. Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18

- 4) Isaiah 54:5-14
 - a. Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13
- 5) Isaiah 55:1-11
 - a. Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6
- 6) Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4
 - a. Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11
- 7) Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28
 - a. Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4

New Testament

- 8) Romans 6:3-11
 - a. Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
- 9) Matthew 28:1-10

REFLECTION

In the darkness of this night, our savior has become our light, our salvation. Do you believe this? Darkness and sin are powerful, but Christ has conquered all. It is so easy to give in and not to believe – it is night. But, on this Holy Night, our Savior lives. As the Gospel proclaims, "He is not here, but He has been raised." Our God has never abandoned us. He is all powerful. He has conquered the night: sin and death. Do you understand?

We have just heard the story of Salvation History in the Old Testament. It tells us of the power of our God. In creation – all things created – all things are declared good. God rose up Abraham and because of his faithfulness – I will abundantly bless you. Forever, I will be faithful to the covenant – crushing your enemies. I will be your God, you will be my people. But, somehow, we preferred sin – unfaithful to the covenant. We were attracted to the darkness and to sin because of its false, but seductive ways.

Jesus is God's son. He came to show us the way to the Father. He calls us by name, "follow me." Jesus says, I will embrace

you, love you, and lead you to the Father. I will give you food that will help you live forever and will give you life. I will be your light. I will refresh you and wash you clean. I will show you how to live by serving one another and surrendering yourself to the Father. But, somehow, we preferred darkness and sin; its seductive glow was too strong.

Did you hear the Word of God? He tells us, "I will never abandon you." I will always be faithful, and my covenant is forever. Jesus tells us that the Father & He are One. He tells us, "I will show you the way, if you simply follow me. Everything I have done for you is so that you will find life and live it to the fullest."

On this most Holy Night, Death is no more. Our Jesus is risen. He is our Light! He is the one who refreshes our souls and washes us free of sin and guilt. Tonight, truth has conquered the father of lies. Death has lost the battle once and for all. God remains faithful, and Jesus our light continues to show us the way to the Father.

My friends, in the darkness of this night, our Savior lives. Do you believe this? In the glory of this night, a light shines to remind us that the battle is over. Satan, sin, and darkness have lost. Our God is all-powerful! Do you understand this? In Christ, we have our Savior. He is raised. He is here! He is ready to wash us clean, to feed us, and lead us to the Father. He shows us the way to Eternal life tonight, tomorrow, and always. We celebrate the Eternal Easter: our Salvation - Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

April 5, 2026 – Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Colossians 3:1-4

John 20:1-9

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Psalm 118:24

EASTER PRAYER

From the opening collect of Easter Sunday Mass

O God, who on this day, through your Only Begotten Son, have conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity, grant, we pray, that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection may, through the renewal brought by your Spirit, rise up in the light of life. Through Christ Our Lord. **Amen.**

REFLECTION

As most of you know by now, I love Christmas. I love Christmas morning with all the joy it brings: the gifts we receive, the family that surrounds us, the feeling of being loved, and the peace which is in our hearts. Is there any other day in the year which we can feel this way? Ask children, and they will say no! However, ask a person of faith who has a real relationship with Christ, and you may get another answer. Today is Easter Sunday. This day has arrived and what a glorious day it is. Christ is Risen, Alleluia. What are our feelings this day? Do we have the joy within us like a child on Christmas morning, knowing we have received the greatest gift ever given?

Is there joy in our heart and our lives this morning? And, most importantly, what do we celebrate today?

Today, we celebrate that death is not the end. Jesus tells his disciples after his resurrection, "Do not be afraid." I offer you an alternative to death and fear. I offer you eternal life. On this

Easter day, we celebrate that death has lost its sting and that through Christ, we live forever with Him and our eternal Father. Christ offers us life. So, on this beautiful Easter day, we celebrate life. Look around, life has conquered death in every aspect of this world.

Today, we celebrate that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. This morning, we know that every word that was uttered from the lips of our savior was true. He is our Light. He is our God. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. This eternal Easter reminds us that there is no other path to eternal life. We can't find it in power, we can't find it in riches, and we can't find it the satisfactions of this world. Satan has lost the battle; his path leads us to destruction and death. Satan is the prince of lies. Christ proclaims the truth and he leads us to salvation. So, on this beautiful Easter day we celebrate truth. Look around, truth has conquered sin and darkness.

Today, we celebrate that we, too, will one day appear with Him in glory. We have now the hope which is eternal. Christ offers us this hope through his death and resurrection: Hope that we are not left here in this world to die and remain nothing more than dust. This hope that we will live forever reflects his light. This hope is eternal because our God is eternal, and he has washed us clean of our sins and made us worthy to share eternal life with him. So, on this beautiful Easter day, we celebrate hope, like the hope in the hearts of children on Christmas morning. Today, hope is placed in our hearts that one day we will rise to eternal life.

On this Easter morning, we celebrate life, truth, and hope. What else do we need? With hearts and minds renewed, we have been once again restored as children of the light, children of God.

My brothers and sisters, Christmas morning can bring joy, but it is soon forgotten. It comes and goes so quickly. However, Easter brings us life and life to the fullest which never fades or diminishes. Besides, we celebrate Christmas only on one day a

year, but Easter is actually celebrated each and every time we celebrate the Eucharist which is perpetual. Our Christ is risen, alleluia. May the joy of this day last forever and remind us Christ is our Lord, now and forever. Alleluia!

DAILY CHALLENGE

As you enjoy the company of family and friends today with a great meal marking the end of the penitential season, remember the reason for the season: the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for your family and for the forgiveness, mercy, grace, and love you receive in Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior. **HAPPY EASTER!**
