LENT 2015
ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

REFLECTION

After reading this Gospel lesson that instructs us to not disfigure ourselves, many of us will mark this passage into Lent with ashes on our forehead. More often, our actions contrary to the Gospels tend to be subtler and certainly less immediately obvious. We most often shy away from our call to be “ambassadors for Christ” and serve as ambassadors for ourselves, but do so without immediately doing exactly what we were just instructed not to do. My driving probably is not a good representation of Christ to the world, but at least Jesus did not offer explicit instruction on how we should operate automobiles.

If we are ambassadors and our life is a witness, then it is a life that is always pointing beyond itself. We are called in humility to appeal for love to our world. We are to give, not so that we can be recognized for our magnanimity, but so that hope may be known in someone else’s life. We do not fast to be recognized for our resolve, but so that we are reminded to live in constant thankfulness for the grace we enjoy. And, we are to pray so that we stay connected to the one for whom we appeal, not for the recognition of our personal righteousness. We are ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, and our lives are witnesses to the world of the faith we claim.

The ashes on our foreheads this day remind us that we often fail at being Christ’s representatives in the world, and everyone sees it. In spite of that, God still calls us in grace to make a new start, and we with hope turn again and strive forward in discipleship. This faith, in and of itself, is a witness to the Gospel.

Rev. Bryant Oskvig is the Protestant Chaplaincy Director in the Office of Campus Ministry.

PRAYER

O God, in Your compassion may we discover our repentance and in Your love find our hope. Guide us that our lives of faith may share the Gospel with our hurt and broken world. Amen.
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 9:22-25

REFLECTION

The promises of happiness and prosperity through God have been present since the days of the Old Testament. Today in Deuteronomy Moses presents his people with a choice: heed the commandments of the Lord and be blessed by Him, or forsake His promises and perish. We are all given the freedom to choose God or reject Him, but we cannot forget that He wants us to choose Him. Today’s Psalm emphasizes that whatever God does, flourishes, and when we believe, we are

… like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.

Do not be “like chaff which the wind drives away” when faced with hardships. It can be easy to let our relationship with God slide and then only ask Him to solve our problems as they arise. But we cannot forget to thank Him for all that is good in our lives and the blessings we already have. Life is not without challenges and sometimes in the face of these, we grow passive in our faith. Don’t just wait for the extraordinary moments to offer God praise. Make it a regular practice, an everyday action, a simple reminder of all the grace that we experience through God. Which will you be: tree or chaff?

Richie DeMarco, Class of 2016, is a History major in the College.

PRAYER

Lord, I know You watch over me always. Allow my faith to remain strong through all hardship, and let me never hesitate to turn to You, for assistance or in thanksgiving.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 51:1-3-6, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15

REFLECTION

Jesus was toughest on the Pharisees. He was toughest on those whose preoccupation with outward religiosity led to self-righteousness and hypocrisy rather than humble and authentic faith. Isaiah similarly chastises his sackcloth-wearing contemporaries, challenging them, “Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?”

In a world where Christianity is often countercultural, this warning may not seem so relevant at first glance. Sackcloth and wide phylacteries are out of style. But the lesson is far from lost. Lent is an opportunity for us to pause and open ourselves to honest self-reflection. Although we will never be finished products on this side of eternity, the hard questions help us to grow in our faith. Having marked ourselves with ashes just this Wednesday, today’s readings invite us to examine whether our devotion is more than just skin deep. What values do we make a show of professing, but fail to embrace fully in our hearts?

We say we have respect for human life. But do we value the people in our lives for who they are, or simply for what they can do for us? When was the last time we personally reached out to someone in need?

We say we are accepting. But do we make snap judgments about those different from us? Do we strive to love those with whom we disagree?

We say prayer and reflection are important to us. But how much time do we actually give them in a day?

We mark ourselves with ashes. But do we genuinely wish to humble ourselves, and surrender the direction of our lives to God?

Looking deeper, sometimes we may discover a little Pharisee in ourselves. Isaiah and Jesus invite us to a fast that goes beyond appearance. Authentic fasting that at its heart is comprised of small, concrete actions that foster self-examination and sacrifice. In this way, we can slowly open our hearts more and more to receive the bridegroom.

Casey Oswald is an alumnus of the Class of 2009 from the School of Foreign Service.

PRAYER

Lord, may our values be more than words and our Lenten fasting be more than show. May our fasting help us, day by day, to open our minds and hearts to You.
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 86:1-6, 18-19; Luke 5:27-32

REFLECTION

“Saying yes to some things means saying no to other things.” This is the short but profound wisdom Reverend Jon Rice has given to many busy students, myself included. Often what this advice means is something along the lines of, “No, you can’t commit to another activity on top of your three clubs, your internship, and your sport.” At a place like Georgetown, where busyness is a badge of honor, this is just the advice we need to hear.

I think today’s reading from the Gospel of Luke shares this same message: the necessity of saying no. Yet, what is at stake was much bigger than busyness – it is the choice between the world and Christ. Luke gives us an unlikely example to follow in Levi (also called Matthew) the tax collector, who understands that saying “yes” to Christ’s call means saying “no” to many things. For Levi, it not only means the immediate choice to leave his post, but a never-ending number of daily opportunities and choices for which he must decide: yes or no?

How often do we as Christians ever say no to anything in order to follow Christ? Our culture has made it easy for us to categorize our pursuit of Christ and to relegate it to a few hours per week. We pursue our studies, our work, our friendships, our health. Often our faith is no more than an extracurricular, tacked onto the list of everything else we do in our pursuit of happiness, security, and prosperity. But Christ made it clear that following him necessitates saying no to everything that might come before saying yes to Him. Today we are challenged by the example of Levi the tax collector to ask ourselves what we need to leave behind to follow Christ. Let us take encouragement from Levi who heard Christ’s call and, “leaving everything behind, got up to follow Jesus.”

Carson Yates, Class of 2017, is a Global Business major in the School of Foreign Service.

PRAYER

Lord, help us today to open our hearts to You. Reveal to us what hinders our pursuit of You. Grant us the courage and faith to cast off the sin that so easily entangles us, for Your glory and for our joy.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25:4-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

REFLECTION

Jesus goes into the desert, that place of silence and testing, and he comes out with a new sense of himself. He is transformed. From a life of hidden in Nazareth, he emerges as a person with a mission – to proclaim the fulfillment that all seek, to announce to the world that “the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

Noah comes in from the flood, that time afloat on uncertain waves, and he is made aware of the truth and certainty of God’s promise. A new covenant is proclaimed, one in which all humanity and all creation can forever trust and hope.

There is an important progression here, from places and times of silence and challenge – and even suffering – to a growing sense of identity, fulfilled in a covenant. Lent takes us into the dry sand and onto the rolling seas of our lives, and invites us to discover anew the deep, abiding presence of God. We make time for prayer, reflection, and service, not simply out of a spirit of penance, but because it is in such honest grappling that we find our truest selves. We uncover anew the God who is always present, and who binds Himself to us with a covenant that can never be broken.

Rev. Matthew Carnes, S.J., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Government and a Jesuit-in-Residence in Kennedy Hall.

PRAYER

God of call and covenant, draw us deeply into this time of honest self-reflection and questioning. Calm our fears and worries, and lead us ever further into the truth and identity You have loved into each one of us. May we discover in constantly new ways Your Kingdom that is now at hand.
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19; Matthew 6:7-15

REFLECTION

The change in seasons brings about a transitory period that is both beautiful and at times difficult to accept. As one is finally getting accustomed to the weather patterns of one season, another, both familiar, yet different, replaces it. Just as the seasons change with time, so does our relationship with God. Sometimes we experience a “summer” with Christ, where our connection is strong and our future with the Lord is bright. Other times we are in “winter,” where our walk is weak and our relationship is cold and shivering. Those periods of spiritual lows have the tendency to draw us away from God. We savor our busyness and forget to pray, read, and meditate, furthering our disconnection from Christ. We turn away from him and instead look to others to solve our problems. As Heather Mills once said, “We chase waterfalls neglecting that our Lord has provided us oceans.”

Today’s readings bring the sweet reminder of the power and the love of God. Isaiah 55 calls into perspective God’s words and commitments to us found in the Word, while Psalm 34 demonstrates how God provides comfort to the weary and the weak despite their fears and shortcomings. Finally, it is in Matthew 6 that we are provided a simple framework for talking to God, with the added reassurance that God knows our needs… all we need to do is ask.

We are constantly changing seasons, both physically and spiritually. Surviving those “winters” are difficult, yet possible. Bundle up and protect yourself against the chilly times with the warm promises of God.

Adebusola “Bussy” Awosanya, Class of 2015, is a Biology of Global Health major in the College.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray to remember Your promises and continually bask in Your presence through all seasons.
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138:1-3, 7c-8; Matthew 7:7-12

REFLECTION

“Ask and it will be given to you…”

I’m much more comfortable with the less soul-baring “Follow me” than the more active “Ask me” commission. How undignified to ask anyone for anything! How humbling to prostrate yourself like Queen Esther before the Lord! I prefer my groveling to be in private, if at all. Lord, help me with my pride!

We are all trying to follow the path of the Lord as best we can. How do we make the transition from “follower” to “conversationalist” with God? Lord, help us to be humble, so that we don’t wait for a big trauma in life to seek you out. Help us to ask, to express gratitude, and to sustain the conversation of prayer with You. Illness or death may propel and compel us to ask of You, yet give us the grace and humility to engage in a personal relationship with You now.

We need not wait for the personal relationship and conversation with You. Help us in our journey to seek for you for that is where we will find the answers. Be patient with us and remind us, “How much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.”

Gina Bleck is the Assistant VP of Design & Construction for Georgetown University’s Planning and Facilities Management.

PRAYER

Dear Lord and Father, help us to overcome our pride and provide the grace and patience for us to ask, to listen and to respond. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

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

REFLECTION

Today’s readings are extremely unnerving. Jonah preaches God’s wrath, and in response, the people of Nineveh, and even their animals, fast from both food and water! Jesus draws on the story of Jonah and preaches, “This generation is an evil generation….At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it.” Apparently God takes sin pretty seriously.

Yet perhaps the most unsettling reading from today is not focused on God’s judgment, but on how God changes us. The psalmist prays, “Create a clean heart for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me…. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.” This is so unsettling for us because we must rely on God to create for us a new heart, one that will be humble and contrite. How difficult it is to be humble and contrite!

In our best moments we know that humility and contrition are simply our recognition that we long for the perfection God has promised us, and the Psalm shows that the new heart God creates for us is something to rejoice over. We all know that we need a new heart, one that is no longer turned in on itself, but is rather a big heart open to God and others. It is this kind of heart that Jonah wanted for the people of Nineveh, and it is this kind of heart that God is offering to us at every moment. The good news is that Jesus has that heart. He shows us that when we enter into his life, the Holy Spirit helps the heart of Jesus beat inside of us. Then we live as though God is truly God. When this new heart is inside of us, we experience the world as God does. Rejoice! When the final day arrives, know that the perfect heart will be ours forever.

Josh Evans is a Chaplain-in-Residence for Alumni Square and the Townhouses.

PRAYER

Create a clean heart for me, O God, so that Your heart beats within me.
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 29

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1-8; Matthew 5:20-26

REFLECTION

Upon the conclusion of my four years at Georgetown last May, I stood at the crossroads of excitement and uncertainty. As I was about to embark on life’s next adventure, I found myself in deep reflection and prayer throughout the summer, pondering my relationship with God and my role in society. How can I better serve Him? How can I better walk in His ways, observe His statutes, commandments, and hearken to His voice?

He called one day. His voice spoke louder and clearer than ever before. And I answered. His call took me to the streets of D.C., then the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, demanding justice. As I participated in march after march, I stood alongside unfamiliar faces – but they were not strangers. The usual sense of discomfort or fear of the unknown vanished as we raised our voices together in unison, while the smiles shared dissolved any notion of foreignness. This instant sense of community was the manifestation of our love for one another – fellow children of God answering His call to love Him. To love Him and His creations fully with all our heart and soul. As “women and men for others,” it is our duty to recognize our shared humanity and ensure that the dignity and worth of every being endowed by our Creator is honored.

His call returned me to the root of Christianity: agape. To best serve Him, I must continue to cultivate this love to promote the common good and the welfare of all peoples through expanded faith in Him. His spirit and love propels every step I march and every chant I cry in fighting for all of God’s children.

I pray that God may help us to re-center agape in our lives so that we may walk in His ways and see God in each of us and in everything we do.

Taylor Griffin, C’14, is a Congressional Staffer in the U.S. House of Representatives.

PRAYER

Lord, help us to re-center agape, Your love, in our lives so that we may walk in Your ways and see You in each being and in every action. Amen.
A DAILY DEVOTIONAL BY AND FOR THE GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

LENT 2015

MONDAY, MARCH 2

Daniel 9:4b-10; Psalm 79:8-9, 11, and 13; Luke 6:36-38

REFLECTION

Shakespeare has created some of the most powerful images of the human condition, of utter human frailty amid extremely high stakes. While reading today’s scripture about the Israelites who felt “shamefaced” for having rebelled and sinned against God, a scene from Macbeth sprang to mind.

Having murdered Duncan, Macbeth imagines his hands stained in blood and says,

Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red. (II.ii.75-78)

This is the feeling I get sometimes when reflecting on my own sin, which can feel like a permanent stamp of inadequacy. Yet in this time leading up to Easter, we must remember that sin does not have the final say. Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection wash us clean of the stain of sin, so that we no longer have to bear the burden alone.

In my favorite Bible verse, Paul writes to the Galatians, “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). The miracle of Christ’s resurrection is that Christ eternally lives in all of us. We no longer have to rely on our own faculties, but can rely on God’s grace and His spirit. As for our past sins, God reminds us in Isaiah, “though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow” (1:18). Unlike in Macbeth, there is redemption to be had: we are offered purification by the Holy Spirit and the stain is removed from our hands.

Katherine Propper, Class of 2015, is an Art History major in the College.

PRAYER

God, sometimes the curse of our sin feels like a daily battle to be waged. May we remember to look not on our own strength, but on the spirit of Christ that dwells in each of us. Thank You for Your saving grace, which makes us inheritors to Your perfect glory. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 116:10, 15-19; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10

REFLECTION

St. Paul in today’s letter to the Romans gives us a succinct and compelling source of hope and confidence. We know in our everyday life the confidence (or lack thereof) we have when applying for admission, a job or a place on the team to know the person in charge is in our corner. St. Paul tells us we should be confident: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” If God gave His Son for us, is there anything else He would not give us? When we are discouraged by our failures and sins, when we are criticized justly or unjustly, we are reminded that the ultimate judge has already acquitted us and that it is Christ who intercedes for us. What incredible consolation!

And if believing that to be true can sometimes seem beyond us, we may take comfort from today’s Gospel. When our finite minds and imperfect faith think the Good News seems “too good to be true,” we have the apostles, who lived daily with Jesus, heard him, saw his miracles and his transfiguration, still struggling to take it in. The journey of faith is a constant return to these incredible truths, but what a joy it is to return to them!

Sister Carol Keehan, D.C., is President/CEO for the Catholic Health Association and serves on the Board of Directors for Georgetown University.

PRAYER

God our Father, we thank and praise you for this wonderful gift. Help us to understand and appreciate it more each day, especially in moments of doubt and discouragement. Make us bearers of this “Good News” to our brothers and sisters in a world that often drowns it out.
REFLECTION

Themes of power and control color the whole of human history including our modern culture. We’re taught how to make things happen, how to set goals, how to be effective with our time to achieve the desired results. In that context, we can easily lose sight of the larger spiritual frame of our lives and our actions can become wrapped up in ego and self-service.

Both Jesus and the psalmist remind us of an alternative, a concept that St. Ignatius describes as spiritual indifference. We may pray to God for what we want – to be delivered from enemies, to have our children in a place of honor – but we are ultimately called to place the whole of our being into the hand of God. This is an acknowledgment of our self as creation and God as Creator, not the other way round. Spiritual indifference is about wanting and trusting in God’s course of action rather than what we think would be best.

This is a difficult concept because it is such a radical departure from the structures of power to which we are accustomed. We may still present God with the desires of our heart, but our fundamental prayer is for God’s hand to lead and God’s love and grace to sustain. Spiritual indifference gives us the internal freedom to accept God’s structure of humble service and work that will challenge us to our very core, even while God’s face shines upon us to strengthen us and illuminate our way.

Brooks Zitzmann is a Chaplain-in-Residence in Harbin Hall and a doctoral student at the Catholic University of America.

PRAYER

Lord, my time, my thoughts, my body, my feelings, the whole of my being, I place in Your hand. I wish only for You to direct me in the ways of love and service for which I am made. Grant me humility in leadership and strength during hardship. And at all times, help me to perceive Your perpetual light upon my face. Thank You, God. I love You, and I trust You.

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23; Matthew 23:1-12

REFLECTION

Georgetown students are a gifted and ambitious lot. Those studying business here seek to be transformed into “globally minded, principled leaders prepared to serve both business and society.”

As one who participates in the development of our MBA candidates, I am reminded of Jesus’ criticism of those in authority who lack moral integrity – who “talk a good line but don’t live it.” Lent encourages a careful examination – are we practicing what we are preaching and leading by example? Scripture instructs, “Say no to wrong. Learn to do good.”

Jesus, too, has instructive words for students as they prepare for their futures: “Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. If you puff yourself up, you’ll get the wind knocked out of you. But if you’re content to simply be yourself, your life will count for plenty” (The Message).

When it comes to following God, integrity and humility are essential traits that reflect to the world some of the light of the One who loves completely and unconditionally. Our world needs this light and we are Christ’s ambassadors. More than any other way, the world “will know we are Christians by our love.” So let us be attractive in attitude and not arrogant, helpful in spirit and not hypocrites, as we strive to love as Jesus did.

God promises, “As soon as you set your foot on the Way, I’ll show you my salvation.” That is when loving and learning begin in a whole new way.

Eric Young is Assistant Dean for the Georgetown University MBA Career Center.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You invite us to walk with You. Lead us, teach us, and transform us on the Way. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31:5-6, 14-16; Matthew 20:17-28

REFLECTION

Prayer

Lord, my time, my thoughts, my body, my feelings, the whole of my being, I place in Your hand. I wish only for You to direct me in the ways of love and service for which I am made. Grant me humility in leadership and strength during hardship. And at all times, help me to perceive Your perpetual light upon my face. Thank You, God. I love You, and I trust You.

Brooks Zitzmann is a Chaplain-in-Residence in Harbin Hall and a doctoral student at the Catholic University of America.
REFLECTION

As a senior, there is a question I constantly hear: “What do you plan on doing after you graduate?” As a result, I have developed preset responses to this question, yet none of which are really set in stone. Only the Lord knows what will become of my future, and Jeremiah commends the person who trusts the Lord. In the Lord, I want to trust, and in Him, I will trust. The one response I do not verbalize, when asked this question, is that I can honestly thank the Lord for allowing me to obtain a college degree. Some of my high school classmates did not make it to college, while others went on to college and ended up dropping out for a variety of reasons. The question that I must ask myself instead is “How can I, in a position of privilege, help others, not as fortunate as me, feel loved and valued as Jesus teaches us to love?”

Jeremiah also brings to mind the image of “a tree planted beside the waters;” and in Psalms, we are presented with a similar image of “a tree planted near running water.” Let us be like this tree that prospers and flourishes because it is nourished by the Lord. May our future rest in His hands. Let us pray for enlightenment and faith: enlightenment, to understand God’s will and to love others, and faith, to rely on the Lord to guide us through challenging moments and the anxiety of discerning our future. May the Lord set our paths and fill them with moments of wondrous love.

Nanci Rivera, Class of 2015, is an Anthropology major and Spanish minor in the College.

PRAYER

Oh Lord, heavenly Father, thank You for always being present and giving me the blessing of having You in my life. I pray that You may inspire love and kindness in all of us, so that we may pass along Your grace. May You and the Virgin Mary—our loving mother—watch over us. Amen.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 5

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 16:19-31

REFLECTION

Jeremiah also brings to mind the image of “a tree planted beside the waters;” and in Psalms, we are presented with a similar image of “a tree planted near running water.” Let us be like this tree that prospers and flourishes because it is nourished by the Lord. May our future rest in His hands. Let us pray for enlightenment and faith: enlightenment, to understand God’s will and to love others, and faith, to rely on the Lord to guide us through challenging moments and the anxiety of discerning our future. May the Lord set our paths and fill them with moments of wondrous love.

PRAYER

Oh Lord, heavenly Father, thank You for always being present and giving me the blessing of having You in my life. I pray that You may inspire love and kindness in all of us, so that we may pass along Your grace. May You and the Virgin Mary—our loving mother—watch over us. Amen.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 6

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Psalm 105:16-21; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

REFLECTION

Deadly sibling rivalry and a parent’s foolish preference — this is a sadly familiar story. It’s painful how we can be angriest within our own family, but such is the dynamic of families when parents just don’t get it. Was Jacob unaware of how much his other sons hated this “child of his old age?” Did he send Joseph to his brothers in a naïve attempt at reconciliation? Must Joseph wear the very tunic to meet them that is such a sign of his father’s favoritism? How can they sell Joseph off so brutally, knowing it will break their father’s heart? We know the backstory for this hatred: Jacob had many sons by Leah his first wife, but Rachel, the wife he truly loved, bore him no sons until Joseph. Then again, Joseph didn’t exactly help things by boasting of dreams in which his brothers bow down and submit to his reign. But we also know the rest of the story. As a result of his brothers’ vindictiveness, Joseph winds up a trusted counselor to the Pharaoh in Egypt, exactly where he can best help his brothers when they come to buy grain during a famine. Instead of seeking vengeance, he offers reconciliation to these brothers who once betrayed him. Amazingly, Joseph explains his family’s bitter history as something God has found a way to use: “And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5). That long ago dream, Joseph learns, means that he is to serve his brothers, not dominate them.

This is a grace beyond anything we tend to expect in our daily lives, as we try to get along with our families, neighbors, and co-workers. The best we hope for, when we finally work up the nerve to acknowledge our own role in a conflict, is reconciliation. Yet Joseph’s story suggests that God’s truth is far greater: God is with us even in our worst moments of antagonism and rivalry, working through us for His own redemptive purposes for our lives.

Dr. Victoria Pedrick is an Associate Professor of Classics at Georgetown University.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as we go through our day, may the Holy Spirit remind us of Your purposes at work in every part of our lives, and give us courage to live boldly in that confidence. Amen.
SATURDAY, MARCH 7


REFLECTION

When I was little, I had this belief that everything bad that happened to me was a result of my sin. Every time I encountered something bad in my life, I tried to figure out what I had done wrong to bring about that magnitude of hardship. In my head I envisioned a mountain of sins piling up, waiting to punish me because I could not live up to God’s perfect standards.

Even now, it is sometimes hard to believe that this God, good and just, can pardon our sins so freely. And yet, this is exactly what Jesus tells us in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Just as the son who felt unworthy and sinful in the face of his father was thrown a feast of celebration upon his return, we who have fallen so deep into sin are welcomed back with open arms, our sins forgiven and left behind. This is the extent of His love for us. Can you wrap your head around that? Your heart? No matter what we’ve done, how far away we have strayed, He is still waiting, anticipating the day we return to Him so that He can throw us a feast of welcome.

During those times when we feel like there is no hope, that we have really fallen too far this time, that “even I wouldn’t forgive myself,” let us remember that those are not God’s words. There is no sin too dark, no chasm too wide for God to reconcile us with Him and that is comforting to know. We have no mountain of sin looming behind us because through His love, we have been saved and freed from the bondage of our sinful nature. Instead of punishing ourselves for our shortcomings and stumbling, let us offer up a shout of praise and a prayer of thanksgiving for our God who loves unconditionally and forgives completely.

Angela Yang, Class of 2017, is a Computer Science and Linguistics major in the College.

PRAYER

Father, You are an almighty and loving God and we thank You for the grace You have given us, even in our darkest times. As You remove this bondage of sin from our lives, let us realize Your overwhelming love for us. We stand in awe of You. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 8

Exodus 20:1-17, 18-20; Psalm 19:8-11; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

REFLECTION

In the Eastern Orthodox Church each Sunday of Lent or the Great Fast – as it is referred to in our tradition – has specific commemorations. For us, the Great Fast started on February 23 and we will be celebrating the Resurrection of Christ on April 12th, as we have a slightly different way of calculating the date of Easter. Therefore today is the second Sunday of Lent for us.

The specific commemoration for this second Sunday is St. Gregory Palamas. St. Gregory lived in the 14th century and is considered a defender of the Christian faith. He developed a doctrine relating to the Divine Light, stemming from Christ’s Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, when He is witnessed by some of the disciples in radiance. As we journey towards the Feast of Feasts – the Resurrection of Our Lord – our Lenten efforts might hopefully assist us to see our lives and the world in which we live in the Light of Christ, to truly comprehend what is needed in our lives.

Living in this fallen world it is easy enough to view things in a worldly light, so that we might not “see” what is truly necessary for us or what our priorities should be. As Christians we should seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, for that is our ultimate goal. If we can view our lives in the “light of Christ – the Divine Light,” how to obtain this goal might become clearer to us.

In our tradition the Church asks its members to abstain from meat or animal products during Lent. In many Christian traditions there is the custom of “giving up” certain foods or practices during Lent. These traditions are not just about denying ourselves from enjoyment during this time of year. They should trigger in us the contemplation of what changes we need to make in our lives so that we might grow closer to Christ by the time we celebrate His Resurrection. Indeed, so that we might reflect Him -- His Light -- more brightly in our lives, not only on the day of Easter, but always.

V. Rev. Constantine White is the Orthodox Christian Chaplaincy Director in the Office of Campus Ministry.

PRAYER

St. Gregory was also a proponent of the use of the Jesus prayer, to help us to “pray without ceasing” as we read in St. Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians. This prayer, said repeatedly, can aid us greatly in our life journey to the Resurrection:

“O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” – The Jesus Prayer
MONDAY, MARCH 9


REFLECTION

Nowadays I think quite a bit about ordinary habits. Two years ago my best friend gave me the book *Daily Rituals* by Mason Currey. It is a comfort to read that excellence follows from both mundane and unusual lifestyles. Anthony Trollope wrote three thousand words every morning before heading to work at the post office; Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec sketched in cabarets and brothels; and Nikola Tesla worked in a dark office until midnight, stopping only for a dinner set with eighteen clean linen napkins. I think about my own lifestyle. For perhaps too long I have privileged the weekend over the working day—focusing on each holiday’s potential for adventure instead of relishing the particular challenge posed by the daily grind and familiar colleagues.

In today’s readings, we dwell with the ordinary and with a foreign approach to the ordinary. 2 Kings tells us of Naaman the Syrian, a leper, who travels to Israel to be cured. The prophet Elisha suggests that Naaman—the foreigner—wash himself in the River Jordan and, though skeptical of the humble method Elisha advises, Naaman does so and is cured. It’s no coincidence that the Syrian is ultimately persuaded not by Elisha, but by his own servants—the ordinary.

Like the people of Nazareth, we receive a hard truth from Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. He says no prophet is accepted in his or her native place. During the time of Elijah and Elisha, God extended his favor not to the Israelites, but to the Gentiles—to those like Naaman, who is cured even though Jesus says there were many Israelites who also suffered from leprosy. Unspoken is the fact that Naaman accepted Elisha’s authority when Elisha’s people did not. As people of faith then, we receive the message of Jesus in our dual roles. As shepherds we understand that we may be occasionally refused at home, where we usually find comfort and security. As sheep we try to be receptive to the extraordinariness of the people in our day-to-day lives, however familiar and unsurprising they often seem to us.

In the words of George Eliot, “Adventure is not outside man; it is within.”

Shea Houlihan (SFS’13) is a Marshall Scholar studying for a doctorate in Evidence-based Social Intervention at Jesus College, University of Oxford.

PRAYER

God, help me to encounter my friends and neighbors with new eyes and to witness the remarkable that already fills my everyday. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6, 7bc, 8-9; Matthew 18:21-35

REFLECTION

I remember when I was in kindergarten one day I had the brilliant idea to cut my own hair. I don’t know why but some part of me just wanted to take my scissors and cut one of my pigtails in half. So I did. Immediately after, I realized I had done something wrong and I knew I was going to be in trouble. I freaked out. When my mom picked me up from school and asked me what happened to my hair, I lied. I said a boy in my class did it. I was so scared of getting in trouble that I didn’t tell the truth and almost got someone else in trouble because I didn’t want my mom to know my mistake.

The greatest gift God has given us is His forgiveness. When we make mistakes, He doesn’t want us to run and hide from Him. He wants us to run to Him. As the scripture says, God is “gracious and merciful.” God will always welcome us back with open arms.

And just as God forgives us, we should forgive others. There is no mercy greater than God’s and we should share that mercy and grace with others. We are all sinners and none of us are perfect, but thanks to the grace of God and the sacrifice of His Son we are given infinite chances to be who God wants us to be.

Zakiya N. Jamal, Class of 2015, is an English major and Classics minor in the College.

PRAYER

God, help us to live by Your Word and forgive us when we fail. Help us to trust in You and to not take Your mercy for granted. Let us appreciate all that you have done and continue to do for us.
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

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

REFLECTION

Often I can be tempted to treat the Lenten season as a time for self-improvement, a kind of second chance at failed New Year's resolutions. I try to cut out my bad habits and form new, more beneficial ones. With this attitude, my prayers, fasting, and even my almsgiving can become focused on me and my own personal relationship with God. This approach to Lent can make it easy to forget that this season is a gift, an opportunity to nourish our personal relationship with God, which overflows into our relationships with the members of our community.

Today's readings emphasize our place in the community of God's people. Moses and the ancient Israelites knew that God did not give His statutes and decrees to each person individually. He gave them to the entire people as part of His special relationship and covenant with them. They also understood that these words were meant for more than just those present to hear them. God's love and law are for all generations. It is the responsibility of the community to internalize these words and pass them on to their children.

Similarly, Jesus commands us to not only "obey" the law, but to "teach" others to do the same. For us who hear his words today, he is saying, "Whoever obeys and teaches others these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."

God's love, God's Word, and God's law are gifts. When we are open to receiving them as such they can penetrate and transform us, not for our own personal gain or fulfillment, but so we can transmit that love, that Word, and yes, even that law, to others. This Lent, let us choose practices that will not only open us to these gifts, but will help us encourage, support, and share them with those around us.

Allison Masserano (C'12) is in religious formation as a Postulant with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I offer this prayer on behalf of all Your people. Thank You for the gift of community. This Lent, may we be open to the transformative power of Your love, Your Word, and Your law so that we all may become gifts for each other.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; Luke 11:14-23

REFLECTION

When I was nine years old, I played in a “Little Linkers” golfing group with other kids my age every Thursday after school. My parents always described me as a “passionate” golfer, which I now realize was a way of justifying my intense frustrations and fits of anger on the golf course when the ball didn’t go where I wanted. During the last tournament of our season, I hit my ball into a sand trap. Walking into the sand, I swung my club towards the ball, and missed. Frustrated, I swung again. Another miss. With each swing I could feel the anger boiling inside of me, my swings turning from realistic attempts at hitting the ball to thrusts of anger at the sand trap I could not escape. My parents ended up pulling me out of the tournament, and I walked off the course, round incomplete and all faith in my abilities lost.

When looking at the readings today, I couldn’t help but think about this round of golf I played when I was nine years old. In the reading from Jeremiah, “faithfulness has disappeared” from the people. After trying to hit the ball out of the sand trap so many times, my faith was gone, and I didn’t believe in my abilities anymore.

Yet, whose fault is this? In Jeremiah’s reading, God is trying to reach out to the people, but they are not obeying or listening to what He is trying to say. It is in human nature to be stubborn, yet sometimes we take this free will given to us by God as an avenue away from Him. Being stubborn is only human, but how is God supposed to reach us if we are too stubborn to reach out to Him? If we turn our backs to God, it is impossible for us to listen to His words and hear His guidance. Instead, we must stop, take a deep breath, and be open to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Only then will we be able to get out of the sand trap, and finish out our round.

Hannah Muldavin, Class of 2015, is a Government major in the College.

PRAYER

Dear God, please open our hearts and minds to Your guiding grace and wisdom. Give us the ability to hear Your words and follow in the path of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
LENT 2015

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81:6c-11ab, 14, 17; Mark 12:28-34

REFLECTION

There is a well-known prayer of peace by St. Francis of Assisi usually given at the benediction of a service, or as the prayer before a gathering or other moments of collective reflection.

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error; truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

While there is more to the prayer, the part included here sends the message that the remedy for the sin and pain of this world is in the antithesis of its reality. As scripture says in 1 John 4:18, "Perfect love casts out all fear:" St. Francis understood that evil realities are driven out by the spiritual goodness of love, pardon, truth, faith, hope, light and joy. Moreover, it was Jesus and his pursuit of the act of loving outside ourselves that laid the foundation for these understandings.

In Mark 12, Jesus is asked, “Of all of the commandments, which is the most important?” Jesus replies, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” He combines the two aspects to highlight that their importance is coexistent. In an unpredictable world, where the reality of evil seems to be greater than the reality of good, it is our responsibility to pursue what it means to love both God and our neighbor wholly and intentionally.

Rev. Khristi Adams is a Chaplain-in-Residence in New South Hall.

PRAYER

“O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand; To be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.”

- St. Francis of Assisi’s Prayer of Peace

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51:3-4, 18-21; Luke 18:9-14

REFLECTION

These days, my mind is on the many killings happening right now around the world – many of them “in the name of religion.” None of them justified, in my opinion. And so, for me, this sentence from the Old Testament stresses more than ever the need for all of us to love each other: “For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice.”

Sacrifice comes in many forms, but the reason for sacrifice is important. Sometimes, it is because of one’s own belief and lack of respect for other beliefs. God gave His Word to mankind to help us to love and live in peace. The psalmist tells us, “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Remember though, this means neither towards Him, nor towards others!

The issue of sacrifice and love is echoed in other texts as well and I am reminded of a message at the heart of my all-time favorite book series: Harry Potter. Attacked by the dark wizard, Lord Voldemort, the young Harry survives because of an act of love. Harry’s headmaster, Dumbledore explains, “Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn’t realize that love as powerful as your mother’s for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.” (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone)

It is love that lead Harry’s mother to sacrifice her own life for her son. It is love, from his family, friends, even himself, that protects him from evil in the following years. Love helps him defeat Voldemort. Love is what should protect and unite all of us, atheists, agnostics, and people of all faiths, in the fight against terror and murder throughout the world.

To love means to respect, and this goes for religious and non-religious people alike. When we learn to replace provocation with respect, and hate with love, the world will be a better place.

Leah von der Heyde is a 2014-2015 exchange student in the College from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany.

PRAYER

God, help Your faithful, however they may call You: help them realize You wish them to love rather than sacrifice, for love is the ultimate sacrifice to You. Help them understand that if we practice love, there will be peace on earth – and in heaven.
MONDAY, MARCH 16

Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b; John 4:43-54

REFLECTION

We are now in the depths of the Lenten season. Many of us surely are feeling spread thin by our efforts. We are holding our breath, it seems, waiting to return to the comfort we know. Yet while we seem to swim in the deep, we should not forget that in this season of preparation we are not tasked to become less than what we are, but rather to be truly what we are always meant to be. We increase our prayers, our spiritual rigor, our charity, our love, and above all our humanity. We are practicing what it means to truly be alive, living into the life promised to us by the resurrection of the Lord.

Today's scripture readings look forward to this life. The prophecy from Isaiah looks ahead towards the "new heavens and a new earth," towards a time when people will live full lives and not be cut down prematurely. Likewise, the Psalmist sings to the Lord a song of praise, being rescued from the depths of Hades and brought back to life. While Isaiah looks towards the new creation, and the Psalmist celebrates the return to life from death, the Gospel reading goes a step further, showing us how to partake of this new life. We see the royal official simply going to find the Lord, i.e. seeking the truly Good. By this simple act of faith, his son was saved from death. Likewise, by going after what is good, with simple expressions of love, acting in a manner that is Christ-like, we may also live and partake in the new creation, free from the relentless culture of death that surrounds us. In doing these things, our will matches up with the Divine Will. Our life too matches up with His life.

Our faith is such that the greatest event in the history of the world, the return to life from certain death is framed as an event as mundane as a person waking from sleep. That is literally what the word "resurrection" means: to rise again! This great condescension of our Lord allows us to live iconically: every time we sleep, we descend into Hades, every time we wake up, we are given another chance to seek the good, to truly be alive. By living in His life, dying and rising yearly, monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, we grow near unto God. We inhale and we die. Soon we will exhale again into life.

Evangelos Vekios is a post-baccalaureate student studying Classics at the College.

PRAYER

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your commandments; so that in imitating Your love, even I, a sinner, may discern Your Will and find life everlasting. Amen.
LENT 2015

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

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

REFLECTION

In religious contexts, we regularly use words like “gracious” and “merciful” to talk about God, but have you ever really thought about what they mean? We use them so often that most times we don’t give much consideration to how they are used. For example, today’s Response from Psalm 145 says, “The Lord is gracious and merciful.” Note that it does not say the Lord has graciousness, or the Lord gives mercy; it says the Lord IS grace and mercy. In other words, it is the nature of God to BE gracious and merciful.

When we think about what this means, it is good news. The psalm goes on to say that the Lord is compassionate… faithful… just… near to all in need. All this is good news in the best sense. As we work our way through the fourth week of Lent, this is the kind of good news we need to hear. The work of Lent is to reexamine our lives, do penance and sacrifice, and make a kind of spiritual “house cleaning.” This good news tells us that throughout our sorrows, throughout our human sinfulness, God is gracious and God is mercy. Mercy is not dependent on us and what we do, but on God and who God is. Good news indeed.

Dr. James Wickman is the Director of Music, Liturgy, and Catholic Life in the Office of Campus Ministry.

PRAYER

O God, who is gracious and merciful, sustain Your people with Your love. As we continue this Lenten journey, may we be comforted in our human sinfulness by Your grace and mercy so freely given to us. Bring us closer to You in all ways, so that when called we will respond with that same mercy and grace toward others.

KURT M. DENK (C’96) IS AN ATTORNEY WITH KRAMER, LEVIN, NAFTAZIS, & FRANKEL LLP IN NEW YORK CITY.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

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

REFLECTION

Today’s first reading begins, “the angel brought me, Ezekiel, back to the entrance of the temple of the Lord.”

Lent prepares us, prospectively, to celebrate Christ’s Paschal Mystery – an event that renews creation in a manner evoked in stunning detail by the rest of today’s Ezekiel text. Yet as we prepare to reaffirm that Resurrection faith points us forward, we also remember that this is because of what God already has accomplished. And so Lent also invites us to look back – to be “brought… back to the entrance of the temple of the Lord.” To savor all that God has effected in the history of salvation, and in our own lives, we would do well to pray for that Ignatian gift of memory, recalling all that God has done to fulfill the promise of our original creation in God’s very image.

With that prelude in mind, the imagery of water’s simultaneously creative and restorative power – which we particularly anticipate at the Easter Vigil – carries over in today’s readings to the Gospel at the great Pool of Bethesda. There, Jesus literally re-creates and renews a man desperate for rebirth. John the Evangelist’s specification of the man’s illness, as thirty-eight years running, also allows us to imagine that the man’s dramatic experience with Jesus was not just about stepping into a future as an able-bodied citizen. It suggests that the man may have been deeply cognizant of the whole history of his life, all of which Jesus was both reclaiming and refashioning, and that perhaps explains Jesus’ opponents’ persecutory rage. Smug in their power, they fumed at the prospect that certain pillars of faith were themselves being reclaimed and also being refashioned by and through Jesus’ healing ministry.

As we return to the temple of the Lord this Lent, Ezekiel’s prophetic vision and Jesus’ prophetic Sabbath healing demand that we attend to the prophetic dimension of Lent in our own spiritual practice. We might ask: how is God reaching in, reclaiming our past, so as to refashion our creation for God’s own new purposes?

Kurt M. Denk (C’96) is an attorney with Kramer, Levin, Naftalis, & Frankel LLP in New York City.

PRAYER

Almighty and ever-living God, move me to recall Your great majesty, at work across the length of my life. Move me to a trusting openness to Your work of healing and renewal, in my life and in our world. Draw me to worship You, in spirit and in truth amidst Your church, to the glory of Your name forever. Amen.
LENT 2015

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; Psalm 34:17-21, 23; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

REFLECTION

In December 2007, I spent a weekend in the Taizé Community of Burgundy, France. This ecumenical monastic order is best known for its chant-like songs: short, simple tunes sung over and over again as prayer. Three times a day, I joined fellow visitors in a candlelit chapel and chanted,

*Wait for the Lord,*
*Whose day is near;*
*Wait for the Lord,*
*Be strong, take heart!*

Today is much different than that December weekend. We’re not surrounded by icons, but instead by our unfolded laundry or ungraded papers. We’re not watching falling snowflakes, but instead budding leaves. And we are certainly not in Advent, anticipating the joy of Christmas, but instead in Lent, fasting in remembrance of Christ’s incredible sacrifice.

Yet there is a great similarity in these two moments – in both, we are waiting. We wait for the arrival of our Lord, for the abundance of the upcoming feast days, and for a vacation from school. And, perhaps, we recall how much we hate waiting. The deprivation of Lent, the looming midterm deadline, or the internship interview process weighs heavily on us, so eager are we to just get to the finish line.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus also has to wait. John writes, “No one laid a hand upon him, because his hour had not yet come.” And wow, is Jesus great at waiting! He continues to travel, to teach, to heal, and to prepare himself for his death and resurrection. He is mindful of the final goal, but uses every moment beforehand to its fullest. How can we learn from Jesus’ example, even though our circumstances are so vastly different than His? How can we wait not with impatience, but with serenity?

As a start, I invite you to look up Taizé’s “Wait for the Lord” on YouTube or iTunes. Get comfy, close your eyes, sing along softly. And just… wait.

Laura Wagstaff is the Assistant Director in the Office of Fellowships, Awards, and Resources and student organist for the Georgetown University Chapel Choir.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help us to be attentive to Your voice and grant us the courage to respond to You with our whole heart. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

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

REFLECTION: SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH

Today’s readings reveal to us once again how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New. The Lord’s promise to David that his “kingdom shall endure forever” culminates with the Incarnation of Christ. Matthew points out to us in today’s Gospel that it is St. Joseph who legally inserts Jesus in David’s lineage, thus fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah.

The centrality of Joseph in today’s readings provides an even deeper message to each of us on our Lenten journey. Joseph was able to recognize the voice of God through the message of the angel, and despite his uncertainty and anxiety, he had the courage to immediately follow the Lord’s call. Joseph, then, must have been a man of deep prayer and communion with God as he was able to discern the Lord’s voice. Pope Francis tells us that St. Joseph was, “constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God’s presence and receptive to God’s plans, and not simply to his own” (Homily of 19 March 2013).

Finally, what is most striking about the figure of St. Joseph is his silence. Joseph does not have one recorded word in the Gospels, yet we know that he played a crucial role in raising and protecting the child Jesus. Joseph’s silence is a sign of his strength and capacity to contemplate God, showing each of us that we must set aside silent time to hear God’s quiet voice in our lives.

As we continue our Lenten journey, let us follow the example of St. Joseph. Set aside some quiet time today to listen to the voice of God and pray for the grace of courage to transform our lives in response to His voice.

Louis Cona, Class of 2015, is a Government major in the College.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help us to be attentive to Your voice and grant us the courage to respond to You with our whole heart. Amen.
**REFLECTION**

O Lord, my God, in You I take refuge.

As I look back on the challenges that I have encountered in life, this refrain from Psalm 7 resonates in a big way. Even before I was able to recognize God’s grace for what it was, I was blessed with it. This is easy to see in retrospect. The people who loved me were agents of grace. The inner strength I discovered I possessed during hard times was definitely grace at work. There have been times when I let moments of grace go right by me; I did not comprehend that as a child of God, grace is my birthright, though I may have to claim it.

Today’s Gospel passage is full of grace. Some of the people in the crowd listening to Jesus speak at the Feast of Tabernacles were blessed with the grace of belief. The guards who had been sent by the Pharisees to arrest Jesus were blessed with this same grace, even though they knew that to return empty-handed would be met with contempt, or worse. And then there is Nicodemus, one of the most richly graced people in history, whose status as a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin did not preclude grace opening his heart to Jesus’ message.

God’s grace is there for each of us, every day. Our Lord is always waiting for us to take refuge in God’s grace.

*Kate Cullen is the Assistant Director for Administration in the Office of Mission and Ministry.*

**PRAYER**

O Lord, our God, in You we take refuge. Thank You for the many blessings You have given us, known and unknown. Inspire us to share Your grace with everyone we encounter, today and every day. Amen.
LENT 2015

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

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

REFLECTION

Two major things stood out for me in today's readings: human fragility in decision making and the need for God in all things. We start in the book of Numbers where the children of Israel are suffering because of past decisions they made without consulting the LORD. We continue in the Psalm with a prayer of one calling out to the LORD for guidance and support.

As students, we often frantically discuss and contemplate what our future plans after Georgetown may be. With a heavy emphasis on pre-professionalism, we job search into the early hours of the morning only to wake up before dawn to commute to an internship that we worked so very hard to achieve. These times are very often physically, mentally and emotionally taxing on our minds, bodies, and spirits. The readings today demonstrate that the LORD is always with us even in our times of distress. The scripture reads: “The LORD looked down from his holy height, from heaven he beheld the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to release those doomed to die.”

How often do we seek spiritual guidance when making a decision? During these tough times we often turn to those whom we care about most: friends, family, partners. Yet many times we do not turn to the one who cares about us most: Jesus. He says, “The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone.” So too is the LORD with us.

This Lent let us try to bring the LORD into the conversation when we are making these monumental life decisions. Scripture has shown us time and time again that the LORD is willing and able to comfort us, support us, and guide us in these decisions.

Brian Monahan, Class of 2015, is a Biochemistry major in the College.

PRAYER

LORD, guide me in this decision, help me see Your way. Open my heart to your calling.

MONDAY, MARCH 23


REFLECTION

“I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon.” This was Pope Francis’ response to the question “Who is Jorge Mario Bergolio?” With humility and simplicity of words, Francis makes himself very clear, “It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner.”

If the Pope can openly declare he is a sinner and even claim it as his truest identity, why do I have such a hard time doing the same? I hate admitting fault or blame. And it is especially painful for me to acknowledge times when I have unintentionally or intentionally turned away from God.

The Gospel for today reminds me that no one escapes the stain of sin. The scribes and Pharisees bring a woman caught in adultery before Jesus, to test how he will respond. The punishment according to Mosaic Law is stoning. Instead of responding directly to their questions, Jesus turns the malevolent test into an opportunity for the accusers and onlookers to do some self-reflection. Jesus poignantly replies, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Imagining myself in the scene, I see some in the crowd become crestfallen and move away with Jesus’ question echoing in their heads. Others, still stubborn with defiance, linger, eyes darting between Jesus and the woman, only leaving once they realize the rest of the crowd has thinned.

I am a sinner. But that does not mean I should wallow in my own sinfulness. Pope Francis does not stop his self-description at “I am a sinner;” he adds, “whom the Lord has looked upon.” I am a sinner loved by God, a sinner who can experience God’s endless mercy by naming my sins and asking for forgiveness. I take heart with these words from Pope Francis’ first Angelus address, “God never tires of forgiving us, never!”

Colleen Kerrisk (C’10) is the Assistant Director for Ignatian Programs and Retreats in the Office of Mission and Ministry.

PRAYER

Loving God, during this Lenten season, let me readily acknowledge my sins, ask forgiveness, and open myself up to Your boundless mercy.

PRAYER

LORD, guide me in this decision, help me see Your way. Open my heart to your calling.
THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105:4-9; John 8:51-59

REFLECTION

During the busy activity of the school year, I find myself easily swept up in an achievement-focused mindset. I enjoy the feeling of accomplishment that comes when I succeed at something for which I have worked. Whether it is earning a good grade or successfully putting together an event, the feeling of accomplishment is a significant factor that drives me to work towards my goal. Today's society is increasingly meritocratic, deriving value from an individual's ability and accomplishments, and I often find myself subscribing to this way of thinking. It is a mindset that can be particularly harsh on one's failures. When I find myself swept up in this attitude, there is no message more poignant than that of God's covenant with us, His children.

The readings today remind us of this covenant. In the first reading, God promises Abraham many descendants and land. The responsorial psalm reminds us that God is faithful to this covenant forever, and in the Gospel reading, Jesus promises his followers eternal life. This promise is also freely given out of God's love for us. The redemption Jesus promises cannot be earned, but is given through the grace of God. There is nothing that we can do to warrant God's love—He has already given it to us. God keeps his covenant with us regardless of the successes or failures that we offer Him.

As we journey through this time of Lent, working to spiritually prepare ourselves before Easter, we can engage in the work of learning to accept and trust in God's unfailing love. In times of both joy and struggle, we can take comfort in knowing that God loves us for both our achievements and our failures.

Kelly Kimball, Class of 2016, is a Human Science major and Theology minor in the School of Nursing and Health Studies.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, grant me the grace to accept the gift of Your complete, perfect, and unfailing love. Embrace me in my imperfections, and help me to find true peace in You. Amen.
A DAILY DEVOTIONAL BY AND FOR THE GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

LENT 2015

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10-13; John 11:45-56

REFLECTION

In the times before the crucifixion of our Lord, those in power were threatened by Jesus's popularity. They did not know what to make of the miracles he performed or the effect he was having on the masses. They were greedy for power and popularity, and so the plot to put Jesus to death was inacted. They failed to recognize the complexity of Jesus's being. They were blinded by prejudice.

How would I have reacted to all of this? Would I let faith guide me? How do I handle similar situations in my own life?

From today's readings, we are introduced to a forgiving God who provides a peaceful community for us. In this Gospel, we are brought to view the beginning of the preparation for Jesus' death. These excerpts complement each other through love: God's love for us through both His abundance of blessings, and the ultimate sacrifice of His son for our sins.

When I attended the Stations of the Cross at my home parish, the reader would always end by saying, “What would I have done, and what am I doing now?” I like to believe I would have defended Christ, but speculation is useless. What is more important is what am I doing today to show my gratitude to God and to love as He has taught me. This is a complex question, but I think it is best answered for me with the words “Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam.” Whatever I do, I want to try to help the larger society around me and find my place in God's world. I wish to be welcoming to the unknown, and not just protect my own prejudices. I want to be guided by faith and share the love of God.

Dr. Sean W. Viscount, Class of 2016, is a Science of Business Administration major in the McDonough School of Business.

PRAYER

Lord, help my actions be just and fair and not tainted by expediency. Let me show God's love in all of my actions.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18:2-7; John 10:31-42

REFLECTION

“All those who were my friends are on the watch for every misstep of mine,” laments Jeremiah in today's scripture. Who are these erstwhile friends, and why would they hope we'll stumble? The other readings speak of persecutors as though they will be inevitable actors in our lives. Yet if a friend or colleague ever treats me unfairly, I can have a first-response tendency to consider such situations anomalous. A culturally conditioned belief in my own specialness can cause me to thrash about, wondering why this is happening at all.

I'm trying to learn better how to accept that unfairness is, in fact, fair, or at least common to the human condition. Through prayer and contemplation at our John Main Meditation Center on campus, I have sought appropriate detachment from focusing on myself. Instead, I've asked in prayer to have extra compassion on the plight of those who have been more deeply wronged, such as refugees and victims of human rights abuses. Donating to and volunteering with groups such as Jesuit Refugee Services or the Georgetown Ministry Center helps keep this important global perspective more consistently in mind.

Mother Teresa was known for seeing Christ's face in the poor, but she also had a prayer that works well when people we thought were our friends proceed to confuse or disappoint us. Let us close with her prayer; one which I am incorporating in my devotions throughout Lent: Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you and say, Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.'

Dr. Carole Sargent, a literary historian, is Director of the Office of Scholarly Publications.

PRAYER

“Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you and say, Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.”

PRAYER

Lord, help my actions be just and fair and not tainted by expediency. Let me show God's love in all of my actions.

Dr. Carole Sargent, a literary historian, is Director of the Office of Scholarly Publications.

“Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you and say, Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.”

PRAYER

Lord, help my actions be just and fair and not tainted by expediency. Let me show God's love in all of my actions.
MONDAY, MARCH 30


REFLECTION

The Gospel reading from John today presents an interesting question: What type of person are you? Are you like Mary, who uses her expensive, perfumed oil to anoint Jesus’ feet and then proceeds to dry Jesus’ feet with her hair? Alternatively, are you like Judas, who views Mary’s actions as a waste of the precious oil when it can be sold for “three hundred days’ wages,” with the money then donated to the poor?

Rationally, would it not be better for Mary to do as Judas suggests since his idea helps the greater number of people? Jesus rebukes Judas and those of us who merely think in rational terms by stating, “You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” However, does Jesus not emphasize in his teachings that we should minister to the poor and outcast? Yes, but as evidenced in his statement, that is not all we should do in our lives. We should not forget our loved ones. In anointing his feet and wiping them with her hair, Mary expresses her love for Jesus. To her, Jesus is worth more to her than expensive perfumed oil. For Judas, Jesus’ words serve as a reminder that there are things more important in life than material goods.

So, what type of person are you? Are you like Judas, who is more concerned about the value of material goods than about the people in his life? On the other hand, are you like Mary, who recognizes the fact that the value of material goods is incomparable to the value of loved ones?

Weston Takata, Class of 2015, is an International Politics major in the School of Foreign Service.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will.
- St Ignatius Loyola’s Prayer for Generosity

PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29

Mark 11:1-10; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20; 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

REFLECTION

Today we recall Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. He enters not as a conquering hero on a warhorse, but on a donkey – symbolically an animal of peace. As we enter into the great mystery of Holy Week we should remember that Jesus never ceases to be a king, but in his Passion shows us the true meaning of kingship. We see so clearly in the Gospel of John, Jesus reigns from the cross. In our city of posturing and power games, how often do we stop to think that the only one in history who could rightly claim absolute power gave it up in order to be treated worse than the lowest criminal or slave? The palm fronds waved in front of him and thrown at his feet evoked a Roman triumph, yet the kingship of Jesus renders all such triumphs absurd and odious. All that follows this week – the mockery, the torture, the crowning, and the cloak – is the response from the world of power to the one King who can defeat it. In fact they are the shrill, cruel cry one who knows it has been defeated already. Today and this week let the world of power be silent and unseen in our thoughts as we follow our one true king.

Rev. Paul Rourke, S.J., (C’94) is the Director of Georgetown Law Center Campus Ministry.

PRAYER

Lord, give us the grace to leave behind the world of power, egotism, and self-sufficiency as we follow You, our one true King, on the road to Calvary. In Your love, show us the one true power. Amen.
TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71:1-6, 15, 17; John 13:21-33, 36-38

**REFLECTION**

“And it was night.”

We are nearing the end of Lent and approaching the days of celebration of the Paschal Mystery: the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. All of our previous days of Lent have prepared us for entering more deeply this year into this central mystery of our Christian faith. Nevertheless, however much we have prepared, it comes as a shock, when we actually enter into the mystery as Judas abruptly leaves the table of fellowship to carry out his plan to hand over Jesus. The Gospel says it most simply: “And it was night.” Are there any more stark words in all of scripture than these four words? They are like the clicking of the lock on Jesus now handed over into the powers of darkness in his Passion and death. The die has been cast. He accepts, helpless, defenseless, letting happen to him whatever “night” chooses to inflict on him.

We know something of what it is that Jesus chooses to accept in order to redeem us, something of the depths into which he is taken in the “night.” We know this in what we learn today of torture, of the abuse of children, of extreme depression, of genocide, of war, of starvation. Jesus was handed over into this “night;” he did not defend or protect himself against it. He chose not to... out of love. Though usually not to this extreme, we too have our experience of “night,” of being handed over into what we are helpless to control. Jesus does not take away our experience of “night,” but he changes it in that we are not alone in our darkness, but meet him within it with his love. As the Carmelite Ruth Burrows says, “He drank to the dregs the cup of our suffering... henceforth our lips meet his over the brim.” Let us accompany him with faith and love in these approaching days as Lent becomes the Paschal Mystery.

**PRAYER**

We ask You, Lord, as You enter now into the night of Your Passion, to be present mercifully and lovingly in all that we, together with our brothers and sisters, experience of darkness, suffering, and evil. Be with us in the night and lead us to Your dawn.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

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

**REFLECTION**

We’ve all had unanswered prayers. It’s no surprise to me when I start to doubt something—it only makes sense that I can’t understand what is sensible to God. It doesn’t surprise me that God is incomprehensible to me, but when Jesus struggled with those same doubts, he taught us how to trust despite our fear.

Following Jesus through his public ministry is my favorite part of the Bible. In his incredible prayer life, he gives me hope that some day, I can grow into the same depth of relationship with God. Jesus always found time to pray, and he spoke with his Father more freely than we ever could. Everything made sense to him, and that peace gave him the strength to continue his work.

Then he got to Holy Week. All of a sudden, we watch him pray, literally cry for help, and for the first time in his life, not get an answer from God.

The readings today are hard. We are being told to trust in a God telling us to do things that seem contrary to our very nature. It’s the hardest challenge in the world to accept what God asks of us. The only thing harder might be doing it when it feels like he isn’t even there.

I struggle with that until I turn back to Jesus. In all his fear, he did what God asked of him, all the way to the cross. That is when I am reminded: God always answers us. “Lord, in your great love, answer me.” God’s answer won’t be taking away our suffering, but rather accompanying us in it. His love runs so deep that the only answer we ever need is to know He is there. Even on my hardest days, I can find peace in knowing that God answers me in love. In all of our suffering, we can never be separated from God! Jesus rose from the dead! Our prayers will always be answered, and always in ways more beautiful than what we had asked.

**Eileen Marino, Class of 2015, is a Health Systems Administration major in the School of Nursing and Health Studies.**

**PRAYER**

God, You give us Lent as a time to seek You. As we endeavor to find You, grant that we see You everywhere You meet us in our lives. Help us to be as loving and present with You as You are with us, and let us always rejoice in that love. The night and lead us to Your dawn.
MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2


REFLECTION

God does not shy away from grime. Jesus, absconding from any sense of propriety, stoops down and scrubs the dirt away from his disciples’ calloused and smelly feet. In performing this tremendous act of humility, Jesus reveals to us that, were God to attend a party, you would find the Holy One not seated at the head of the table, but rather bustling between the guests serving drinks, picking up plates, and attending to the spilled wine on the carpet. There is no task too lowly for the Creator of all things to take up and perform with generous kindness.

Our lives must not only mimic the behavior of Jesus, they should seek to be served by it. Opening up our lives to be served by God often requires a tremendous amount of humility on our part. We would rather go out and do something great for God rather than sit back and rely on the mercy and unmerited favor of the Most High. Surely there must be a way for us to render ourselves worthy of receiving such marvelous love? But as soon as we pose this question, we feel the hands of Jesus removing our shoes and socks and dipping our feet into the basin of water, inviting us to reflect on the notion that it is not what we do or accomplish that establishes value in the eyes of God. Rather, God longs to love and serve us because we are God’s own children, created in the image of the Divine.

Kevin Wright, former Protestant Chaplain to the Law Center and Medical School, is the Minister of Christian Education at the Riverside Church in Manhattan.

PRAYER

Most gracious God, help us to receive Your love without reservation and in doing so, see our lives transformed as we recognize our value is not found in what we do, but in who we are as Your children.
GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3

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

**REFLECTION**

In the days of Lent, at times the readings are complex, conflicting, and in unique ways, challenging. They tell of grace and of betrayal; they tell of remarkable faith and remarkable sin; they tell of extraordinary love and extraordinary selfishness; they tell of good people and of not such good people; they tell of Divine Nature and of human nature. As hearers of the Word, we listen to familiar stories and teachings and we listen to new, not so familiar stories and learn lessons we have in certain ways long resisted. So it is, too, with the story, the reality, of Jesus’ passion and death.

On Good Friday, we remember and celebrate a remarkable mystery – the Paschal Mystery. A mystery, not like a puzzle waiting to be solved, rather a mystery, in the theological sense: a moment, an action, an event which took place a while ago, but that in some ways is still taking place in this moment and time, its effects still being realized and revealed in the here and now, as well as in the here(s) and now(s) to come.

The Paschal Mystery is a Unique Invitation: it is an invitation to the Love of God that is beyond all telling, more profound than anyone of us could possibly imagine. It is inexhaustive and boundless. It is enriching, informing, inspiring, and empowering.

If we want to know Jesus better, to love Him more, and to follow Him closely, then we must now gaze intently, listen carefully, and widely open our hearts. We have a unique opportunity to be drawn to Jesus by contemplating this Mystery. By following Him to the cross we open ourselves to a Love that reflects the value of every soul it seeks to save, a Love that enables each soul to know and feel its worth. For this reason, today we weep… with profound gratitude.

Rev. Joseph E. Lingan, S.J., is the Rector of the Jesuit Community at Georgetown University.

**PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, help me to better see and understand the meaning of the Paschal Mystery we celebrate. Keep me mindful of Your life and love, and may the depth of both continue to deepen within me. May Your faith and fidelity be my example, may Your companionship be my comfort, and may Your steadfast compassion and humility be my practice. Bless me with an open mind, a grateful heart, and a generous spirit so that I may better reflect the grace of Your undying Love. May my life always reveal my appreciation for Your exquisite sacrifice. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 4

**Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 55:1-11; Romans 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7**

**REFLECTION**

Nestled between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, Holy Saturday holds a precarious position during Holy Week. I can’t for the life of me recall a particular Holy Saturday in my thirty-eight years as a Catholic, yet I can vividly remember details from enactments of the Passion and Easter Resurrection celebrations. There were the colorful, mesmerizing Good Friday processions in Madrid a few years ago, visiting our niece who was studying abroad there. There are lilies galore and church bells ringing for the better part of the day at our parish on Capitol Hill. But what is Holy about Holy Saturday: the pause between the grief of Good Friday and the jubilation of Easter Sunday? At most, Holy Saturday has been the day I recovered from a Lent of fasting. How can I – how can we – make Holy Saturday more than space between two long Church services?

Because we know how the story ends, and that our tears will be turned into dancing, it perhaps has become easier to skip the chapter titled Holy Saturday. Yet it is on Holy Saturday that Jesus, alone, lying in a dark, damp tomb, calls for our accompaniment. What were those hours like for him? How can we be present to and for him? Holy Saturday is a greater reflection of the reality of my life, much more than its bookends of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Do you find that to be true? More often than not, we are anxiously waiting for test results, not hearing them; we are uneasily writing a grant application, not submitting it; we are wading through the ambiguity of a new relationship, not finding peace within it. These “interim” periods can last longer than we care for, hoped for, or planned. To whatever extent possible, let us be open to the graces and gifts that they bring on their own accord and not merely the anticipation they provoke. Let us reflect on what it means to be with each other as we “mind the gap,” when life can feel most lonely and uncertain.

Andria Wisler is the Executive Director for the Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching & Service.

**PRAYER**

Lord, on this Holy Saturday, feel my hand in Yours, as I feel Yours in mine. Grant that I may also rise with You and be enlivened in the newness of life at Easter.
EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

REFLECTION

Today’s Easter Mass is celebrated not only with a specially selected collection of readings from Sacred Scripture, but also with special hymn, called a sequence. The Easter Sequence takes its name from its first line, “Let Christians offer up their praises to the Passover Victim,” or in Latin: “Victimae Paschali Laudes.” There is a line in the middle I especially enjoy: Dic nobis Maria, quid vidisti in via; sepulcrum Christi viventis et gloriavit resurgentis. (“Speak, Mary: what did you see along the way? ‘The tomb of the living Christ and the glory of the Risen One.’”) In this one line, we glimpse the Easter mystery in a nutshell. First, because of its content: the tomb of death – full as it should be of human sin, weakness, and suffering – is astonishingly empty, its darkness replaced by the Glory of the Christ. Second, because of the experience it relates: the dispelled darkness of the tomb is not after all simply a proposition that Christians acceded to, but a genuine experience that transforms them. Death is replaced with Life, and Darkness gives way to the Glory of the Risen One. Third, because it is something passed along: with the experience comes an impulse, an urge, a demand that witness be given to the experience. That is exactly what today’s Gospel shows the Magdalene doing for the ones hiding in the upper room. That is exactly what she has been doing in the lyrics of the Easter Sequence since its composition in the eleventh century. We are called to do the same: so come, Christians, give praise to the Paschal Victim. Testify to the empty tomb. Give witness to the Glory of the Risen One.

Rev. David J. Collins, S.J., is an Associate Professor and Director of Doctoral Studies in the History Department.

PRAYER

Call me, like the Magdalene, into Your presence, open my eyes to Your Glory, give me the wisdom and courage to lead life fully grateful for the gift of Your Resurrection.

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Artwork taken from the Holy Eucharist in Dahlgren Chapel of the Sacred Heart, photographed by Phil Humnicky.

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