



THE 2024 APA DEANERY OF APPALACHIA

Lenten Devotional

Meditations on the 1928 BCP Daily Office
Lessons composed by Clergy and Special
Guests of the Deanery of Appalachia
and the Anglican Province of America

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Edited *by*

Father Paul Rivard, Dean of Appalachia

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Cover Image:

Christ the Man of Sorrows by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

Prologue

It was not many years after Jesus Christ ascended into heaven that the earliest Christians made a special effort to acknowledge the anniversary of the death and resurrection of our Lord by hallowing the feast of Pascha with this new significance. It was not long after the custom of observing this anniversary was established that the followers of Christ discerned it would be fitting to use the weeks leading up to that great feast as a time of penitential preparation.

Many centuries later, the forty days of Lent leading up to Easter have retained their original purpose of readying the faithful for a joyous and holy Paschal feast. The season of Lent continues to offer Christians an opportunity to walk with Christ in the desert, to absorb the narrative of His passion, to wonder at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, to sense anew the sorrow and confusion of the first Good Friday, and to appreciate again the resurrection fire of Christ newly lit in the dark cavern of death. In short, the time of Lent is meant to be a purposeful communal fasting before the glorious and joyful season of resurrection feasting.

For the last few years, those ordained or called to care for the parishioners of the APA Deanery of Appalachia have worked together to compose a Lenten Devotional to enhance the experience of Lent for those who read its pages in these 40 days leading up to

Easter. This year, Bishops, Rectors, Vicars, Curates, and other guests of the APA have been invited to compose meditations as well.

Each day, scriptural passages assigned for Morning or Evening Prayer in the 1928 Book of Common Prayer lectionary supply the biblical material these meditations are drawn from as the writings are meant to enhance the discipline of praying the daily offices.

Devotional compositions offered for the Sundays of Lent are taken from homilies of various Church Fathers and apply to the Gospel selection of the Order for Holy Communion. On these days, Anglican faithful will hopefully find it edifying to hear both a sermon on the passage from their Rector, and then to consider those thoughts along with the thoughts of one of the great theologians of the Patristic era.

It is my prayer that, when the great feast of Easter finally arrives, those who use this devotional could say that something within these pages served to keep them focused on Christ in the midst of their fast. May your Lenten season be one of repentance, prayer, and earnest meditation on Christ so that you, with the whole Church, may enjoy a joyful, holy, and glorious Easter feast!

Father Paul Rivard
Dean of Appalachia, Anglican Province of America
Rector of Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC

Ash Wednesday, February 14

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - Hebrews 12:1-14

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

We enter into Lent guided by the same athletic imagery which ushered us into the pre-Lenten season of Gesimatide. On Septuagesima Sunday, we read, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” the “incorruptible” crown of life (1 Cor. 9:24-25). Today we are once again instructed to run as in a race, fixing our eyes upon “Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). We run “that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb. 12:10), knowing that “the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward” (Is. 58:8).

Some denigrate the Church’s traditional Lenten fast as insufficiently “spiritual.” But, as we are not merely souls who have bodies but rather body-soul unities, the spiritual benefits of bodily fasting cannot be gotten by any other means. St. Paul was not training for a literal race, but he was quite literally training his body: “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). Today’s instruction to “lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb. 12:12)

speaks to more than the posture of one's body – but not less! We fast with our bodies.

We also fast with the Body – not as spiritual lone wolves but together in our parishes and across this diocese and in the sight of a great “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1). These witnesses are the heroes of the faith described in Hebrews chapter 11. But they are not merely spectators: “these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39-40). Remarkably, we run not merely to imitate but also, somehow, to perfect the saints – just as St. Paul could write that “in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col. 1:24, ESV). We fast for holiness and to win an incorruptible prize – not as individuals but as fellow members, alive and dead, of the Church.

Fast in your bodies. Fast for the Body – for your own good and that of your parish, this diocese, and Christ's whole Mystical Body.

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet... Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:12-13, 2).

Father Mark Perkins
Chaplain/Assistant Headmaster of Saint Dunstan's
Academy
Roseland, VA

Thursday after Quinquagesima, February 15

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - St. John 8:1-11

“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”
(St. John 8:11)

In the Gospel appointed for this past Sunday, Quinquagesima, our Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem” (Luke 18:31). Our Lord was signaling, of course, that his final journey to accomplish all things is about to begin and that the Apostles were to accompany him to be witnesses of the same. For us it signals that our Lenten journey to Jerusalem with him is about to begin. We too are called to be witnesses to all that he accomplished at Jerusalem, his Passion, his Death, and his mighty Resurrection. And so we must accompany him to be the witnesses he has asked us to be. We began that journey yesterday—Ash Wednesday.

As we moved through yesterday’s liturgies, the Daily Offices, Holy Communion, Imposition of Ashes, and the Penitential Office, one thing becomes clear to us: we are sinful creatures in dire need of God’s mercy. While that is ominous, the Ash Wednesday themes also hold an irrepressible joy in the knowledge that God hates nothing that he has made and forgives the sins of all those who are penitent (BCP. p. 124). When we come away from Ash Wednesday to carry on toward Jerusalem, we should have a deep, abiding sense that we have received from God “perfect remission and forgiveness.”

Now it is Thursday after Ash Wednesday. What then is our next step in this journey? As we work our way through

the scripture for this day, we receive comfort for our journey in the psalms appointed. The lessons at Morning Prayer remind us of both the destructive nature of sin in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and that God will give us his grace for our journey. Then at Evening Prayer, we hear from the prophet Jeremiah that God is always with us to strengthen us and will never abandon us. Finally, we hear the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the last lesson of the day, telling us clearly what the next step on our journey with him must be...“Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

His words come from the story of the woman caught in adultery and are spoken only after the woman is left alone with him. Jesus asks her if anyone has condemned her. When she says no one has done so, he responds to her, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Note the intimate setting. Just the two of them. There is a personal connection. It’s almost as if we can hear him saying to her, “I am not going to condemn you. In fact, I am going to save you by dying for you and taking away all your sins, so you actually can sin no more.” It is through this woman’s story that we come to know that what he has accomplished for each of us on this earth is an intimate, personal salvation. It is because of him that we have received “perfect remission and forgiveness.” Jesus is the one who makes it possible for us to journey with him to Jerusalem. And because the journey is now possible, let us take the next step “and sin no more.” Then we truly can be the witnesses he wants us to be “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Father Erich Zwingert
Rector of All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Friday after Quinquagesima, February 16

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - John 8:12-20, 31-36

“... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)

Addiction and sin are related, but not the same. Addiction can involve no sin, at least on the part of the addict, such as a baby affected by intrauterine cocaine addiction. On the other hand, sin can involve no addictive component, such as cheating on one’s yearly income tax. Cheating on one’s taxes is a freely chosen act, driven by nothing but greed or perhaps anger at the government.

The forgoing having been said, many sinful acts do have an addictive component to them, and many addictions do arise from and drive the addict to engage in sinful behaviors. Addictive behaviors and sinful behaviors, particularly those arising from “habitual” sins, have certain aspects in common. Both sorts of behaviors betray a will which is to some greater or lesser extent damaged, rendering the afflicted person in less than complete control of his own behavior. Paul seems to have something of the sort in mind when he writes, “that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (Romans 7:15).

The damaged nature of the will, in both addiction and habitual sin, means the usual strategy of shaming and blaming the victim (either by himself or by another) is

unlikely to be of help. If he could simply apply his “will power” and quit doing those things, he would have done so already. This is part of what Jesus is speaking of in our Second Lesson tonight. As he put it, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” (John 8:34.) The awful reality is we cannot be truly free unless and until Our Lord sets us free.

Of course, no one likes to be told he is not free, that he is not, as that evil poem “Invictus” puts it, “... the master of my fate, ... the captain of my soul.” Anyone who has ever tried to minister to an addict or to a person dealing with habitual sin can tell you, the first step is the hardest, for the person to overcome his denial and to accept his “powerlessness” over his behavior and that his “life has become unmanageable.” This is the truth which puts him on the path to freedom. Turning his will and his life over to Christ, he begins the process of Christ’s setting him free.

The challenge is always to get the individual to take a good hard look at his life to see anywhere addiction or habitual sin may be resulting in sinful behavior. This is one of the reasons the Church encourages each of Her members to make a thorough and fearless examination of conscience during Lent, each year (See The Exhortations – BCP 85-89). If the same things keep turning up, year after year, it is a strong suggestion there may be some things which need to be addressed.

Father Nick Henderson
Vicar of Saint Patrick’s Anglican Church
Brevard, NC

Saturday after Quinquagesima, February 17

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - 1 Corinthians 2

“We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”

(1 Corinthians 2:7)

When the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Logos, took flesh of the Blessed Virgin, then the “wisdom of God ... even the hidden wisdom” was revealed. Nevertheless, the world rejected this revelation. Our Lord bears record to this, for He tells the Pharisees: “Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” Jesus explains the reason why this is so: ‘He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.’ This hidden mystery of God is revealed and made known in Christ Jesus.

God always planned that the full revelation of Himself should be in the Son. The Incarnate Son isn’t a backup plan, nor a rescue mission sent because of the Fall of Adam. St Paul teaches this, for he writes ‘We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.’ Christ also testifies to this, for he tells the Pharisees that ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.’ When the perplexed and disgruntled Pharisees respond to Jesus with ‘Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?’ He responds to them ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’

Jesus Christ is revealed to have been the God that spoke throughout the Old Testament. Scripture teaches us that ‘No man hath seen God at any time.’ At the same time, the Scriptures also tell us that ‘the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.’ Who walked in the garden of Eden? Who spoke with Abraham? Who was it that was seen ascending to the Ancient of Days by the Prophet Daniel? Who was seated upon the throne upheld by the living creatures witnessed by the Prophet Ezekiel? It was the Son of God. It was Jesus Christ.

The Son of God was incarnate of the Virgin Mary at a specific point in time. Nevertheless, the Son of Mary, in his glorified Human nature, cannot be contained nor constrained by time or space. Thus, it was Mary’s Son that wrought the world and all creation, who spoke to the Patriarchs and Prophets. The union of God and Man in Christ Jesus is the reason for all of Creation, and it is the point of all Creation. This is why we read that Christ is ‘The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’

Christians should take great hope and confidence in that God has loved us and desired us from before all time. He loved us so much that the Son took on our nature, to unite all creation to the Godhead. Humanity’s goal is nothing less than union with God and to be partakers of the Divine nature. It is to the Church that the revelation of God has come; ‘God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the Patriarchs and Prophets] without us should not be made perfect.’

Father Joshua Kimbril
Rector of Saint Matthew’s Anglican Church
Weaverville, NC

Lent 1 – Sunday, February 18

Homily for Lent 1

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Matthew 4:1-11

by Saint Gregory the Great

(Homily 16 on the Gospels, Anglican Breviary C211-12)

Some are wont to question as to what spirit it was of which Jesus was led up into the wilderness, on account of the words a little farther on, “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy City.” And again, “The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain.” But verily, and without question, we must take this passage to mean that it was the Holy Spirit who led him up into the wilderness. His own Spirit led Him where the evil spirit might find Him to tempt Him. But behold, when it is said that the God-Man was taken up by the devil either into an exceeding high mountain, or into the holy city, the mind shrinketh from believing, and the ears of man shudder at hearing it. Yet these things are not incredible, when we consider certain other things concerning him.

Verily, the devil is the head of all the wicked and every wicked man is a member of the body of wickedness, of which the devil is the head. Was not Pilate a limb of Satan? Were not the Jews that persecuted Christ, and the soldiers that crucified Him, likewise limbs of Satan? Is it then strange that He

should allow Himself to be led up into a mountain by the head, when He allowed himself to be crucified by the members thereof? Wherefore it is not unworthy of our Redeemer, who came to be slain, that He was willing to be tempted. Rather, it was meet that He should overcome our temptations by his own temptations, even as he came to conquer our death by his own death.

“... it was meet that He should overcome our temptations by His own temptations, even as He came to conquer our death by His own death.”

But we ought to keep in mind that temptation beareth us onward by three steps. There is, first, the suggestion; then the delectation; lastly, the consent. When we are tempted, we oft-times give way to delectation and even to consent, because in the sinful flesh of which we are begotten, we carry in ourselves matter to favour the attack of sin. But God, when he took flesh in the womb of the Virgin, and came into the world without sin, did so without having in Himself anything of this contradiction. It was possible therefore for Him to be tempted in the first stage, namely suggestion; but delectation could find nothing in His soul wherein to fix its teeth. Wherefore all the temptation which He endured from the devil was without, for none was within him.

Lent 1 – Monday, February 19

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - John 9:1-24

“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

(John 9:3)

In our gospel reading today we see Jesus offering hope to the blind beggar Bartimaeus while on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem. Bartimaeus was blind from birth and still lived at home with his parents. Although he was physically blind, Bartimaeus was not spiritually blind for he recognized that Jesus was the Messiah by faith and not sight. He did not recognize Jesus later, but that is only because he had not seen Jesus clearly. Despite the crowd that was following Jesus trying to silence him, Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus the “Son of David” and asks Jesus to have mercy on him and take pity on him (Mark 10:47). Jesus did have mercy on him and healed his blindness by spitting on the ground and making a clay like substance. Jesus rubbed it on Bartimaeus’s eyes and, through his faith in Jesus, Bartimaeus was able to see the natural world for the first time. It was through his faith in Jesus that Bartimaeus was healed, not the clay compound that Jesus rubbed on his eyes that healed him. If Bartimaeus lacked in faith the cure would not have worked. Jesus tells him, “Your faith has made you whole” (Mark 10:52).

The disciples were perplexed and asked Jesus who had sinned, Bartimaeus or his parents, as it was believed by the Jewish people that illness and disability were a punishment for iniquity. Rather than having compassion, they were seeking to blame someone. Jesus clearly responds that neither the sin of the man or the parents were to blame (John 9:1). The man’s blindness had been allowed by God so that “the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:3).

Now, we know from other teachings of Jesus that sometimes

sickness is caused by a person's sin. But not in this case for everyone.

Jesus opposed the judgmental attitude that assigned physical ailments to specific sins. And, while this concept of sin causing a disability may seem odd to us today, I know from personal experience that it is not uncommon for parents of children with disabilities to blame themselves. As the father of an autistic child, I blamed myself for my son's disability. My thought upon hearing my son's diagnosis was, "Why is God punishing him for my sins and inequities?" While this may have been an illogical or irrational thought, I could only see the prognosis and all the things that my son may never experience like graduating from college, falling in love, holding a steady job, getting married or having children of his own. I was not looking at his life through the window of God's goodness and power. After receiving the news of his autism, his mother and I rushed right into therapy and all of the many, many programs out there, thinking that we were doing the right thing for our son but forgetting that he was a child and that you only have one childhood. By placing limitations on him we were hurting the son that we loved and wanted the best for. And most importantly, I could not see that God would use my son for His glory and that my son would be a strong witness for how God was moving in his life. God uses our weaknesses, our disabilities, and shortcomings to draw us closer to him. Just as God was working in my son's life, so God was also working in my own life. He was reminding me of the need to stay humble and to rely on Him. And, while I still have concerns about my son's well-being, I know that God has bigger plans for him. So, I pray that all of those who are facing similar situations, or hardships of any kind in your life, remember that we serve a loving God who works in miraculous ways and that in our brokenness we can be of great service to the Kingdom of God.

Father Yossi Sarid

Vicar of Saint Peter the Apostle Anglican Church

Kingsport, TN

Lent 1 – Tuesday, February 20

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - John 9:24ff

“For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” (John 9:39)

Today’s Evening Prayer lesson presents one of the most poignant accounts of conversion in the Bible. In yesterday’s lesson we saw Jesus and his disciples encounter a man blind from birth. Jesus answers their question about the cause of his blindness by saying “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” He heals the man of his blindness as he declares “I am the light of the world.” The healing causes significant controversy, especially for the Pharisees (the healing took place on the Sabbath). The Pharisees question both the man (“how did he open your eyes?”) and his parents (“was he really born blind?”), and summon the man for questioning a second time at the beginning of this evening’s passage.

In response to the Pharisees, the man gives a simple but profound testimony “one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” After the Pharisees cast the man out Jesus sought him and asked if he believed in the Son of God. Upon asking who that might be, Jesus responds “Thou hast both SEEN him, and it is he that talketh with thee.”

Just as yesterday we saw a multi-step process result in the healing of physical blindness, so today we see a multi-step process in the opening of the man’s spiritual eyes. Asked

who healed him, the man first says “the man called Jesus.” Later he declares that Jesus is a prophet. In verses 31 and 32 he declares Jesus to be not a sinner, but a worshiper of God, and a man of God. Finally, when Jesus reveals himself to be the Son of God the man responds “Lord, I believe.”

Another man, this time a slave-trader from the 18th century, having lived a life of sin and debauchery encountered Jesus. His spiritual eyes were opened. He believed, and ultimately became an Anglican priest. For six years following his conversion he continued to be a slave-trader until his eyes were opened anew and he realized the need not just to stop, but to work for the elimination of slave-trading altogether. He became an ally of William Wilberforce in the successful effort to abolish the African Slave Trade in England.

Let us give thanks that Jesus has opened our eyes, and like the blind man, we too utter the words “Lord, I believe.” But during this Lenten season let us also pray to the Lord to continue to open our eyes to our own sin and to those who are victims of the sin of the world.

In 1772, John Newton, our former slave-trader, penned the following words...

*Amazing grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

Scott Eddlemon

Seminarian at Saint Peter the Apostle Anglican Church
Kingsport, TN

Lent 1 – Ember Wednesday, February 21

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - St. Matthew 9:1-13

“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” (Matthew 9:11)

Have you ever been to a coffee hour after Church? While coffee isn't a sacrament, it is up there with Chik-fil-a as the next best thing. Coffee might not be necessary for salvation like Baptism and Holy Communion but it is sometimes necessary for life. Many parishes have a time built into the Sunday morning schedule for everyone to come together and coffee is normally involved.

Our Lord was also fond of similar times of fellowship. He was famous or notorious (depending on who you asked) for eating with sinners. He wasn't only engaging in Temple prayers, synagogue readings, and preaching on Mountain tops, important as that was, He was also slowing down to take time to get to know those around Him. He still does this. Even 2000 years later, He still comes to us, and offers to share a meal with us. This time however, we are not only eating with Him, we are eating Him. His Body and Blood in the most Holy Eucharist.

Why do parishes prioritize coffee hour or some event to gather Christians together? While we

encounter God through Word and Sacrament in the liturgy, we don't necessarily encounter each other on a Sunday morning. Remember that Christians are called to love both God and their neighbor. What better place to start than with our neighbor in the pew beside us? This time of rubbing elbows with our brothers and sisters in Christ allows us to check in with each other, share what is going on in each other's lives, to give and receive encouragement and comfort, hear and give further reflection on the readings of the day, and to put the virtue of love into practice.

What do you think He was doing while visiting and eating with people? I'd imagine it was much like what we do at coffee hour. We are called to continue the practice of eating with publicans and sinners. That means to slow down enough to get to know the people around us. I encourage you to start with your fellow parishioners who have also been healed by the Great Physician, then to go out into the world to tell the hurting what God has done in you. The more we get to know those publicans and sinners, the more we will find remarkable similarity in where we used to be and would still be without Christ. We are to connect with them, show them mercy, invite them to come to our Lord in repentance and be healed just like we did. Now that is even better than a cup of coffee.

Father Scott Greene
Rector of Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN

Lent 1 – Thursday, February 22

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - John 10:1-10

“When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

(John 10:4)

While meditating on this passage, my mind was drawn back to years ago when my son was in preschool. At pickup time, I would approach the playground and watch him running and playing with the other children. It was always such a joy to see his smiles and laughter – young and not a care in the world. After a few minutes, I would step out and into view. Oftentimes, he would not see me right away, and so I would call out to him. He would immediately stop and turn to my voice, relief flooding his little face. “Mama,” he would cry out as he ran to me, arms reached up. The preschool play yard, where he was happily fixed seconds prior, would fall away from his mind as if it never existed, and he would see only me. Of course, this worldly joy faded as he grew older. However, this memory gave me a clearer understanding on being a sheep in the Lord’s flock. In tonight’s New Testament reading, Jesus refers to himself alternately as the shepherd and the door or gate of the sheepfold. The shepherd knows each sheep by name, and they know his voice. He guides them and cares for them. The door of the sheepfold protects the sheep from danger in the darkness. It is the door that saves them from death.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Without a shepherd and sheepfold, sheep could not exist in a world that is hostile to their many vulnerabilities. In Christ, we can see the profound purpose of the Lord our shepherd and Israel His flock being a central theme woven throughout the Old Testament. The most beautiful literary expression of this metaphor is offered to us in Psalm 23. The Good Shepherd discourse, like Psalm 23, expresses an emphasis on the intimacy between a shepherd and his sheep. It is an intimacy that is deeply felt rather than learned. The Good Shepherd discourse does not teach us about God but rather invites us into a living kinship with our Lord. Like a young child, we are called by name into a relationship of loving-kindness, and mercy. This relationship is the very cornerstone of our spiritual formation, allowing us to enter into the mysteries of God with wonder and awe. In Christ, we no longer fear the thief, and the hostile world fades away. We are saved and therefore vulnerable no more. Christ is the shepherd, who has come to give us life, a life that is abundant in nourishment, sacramental grace, and community. Christ is the door of our salvation, through which we must go to have eternal life and dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Deaconess Cynthia Hensley
All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 1 – Ember Friday, February 23

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - Ezekiel 34:1-16

“I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.” (Ezekiel 34:14)

Today is a so-called “Ember Day” in our church calendar, on which our Prayer Book asks our prayers on the ordained ministry and those aspiring to it. There are four sets of these days in the church year, and, many years ago, ordinations were conducted on these days. So it is appropriate that we read the prophet Ezekiel’s indictment of the clergy of his day.

If you are not clergy, please do not “tune out” of this lesson from Ezekiel. Laity have not only the right, but the duty, to understand the expectations of their shepherds, and to have confidence in them.

Israel is in captivity, and its people dispersed. The prophet compares them to scattered sheep. The spiritual leaders of the day could be part of the solution, but, instead, they are part of the problem. Rather than feeding their flocks, they are eating from them.

Verses 1-10 read like a prosecutor’s opening statement. In contrast, verses 11-16 are words of promise and hope. If the shepherds continue to fail and mislead their flocks, God will intervene and

provide for them himself. He will gather his dispersed sheep, He will provide rich pasture and the solid food they have been lacking.

This writer experienced some of the same isolation and hunger that the dispersed and undernourished flock of Israel knew in Ezekiel's time. The church of which he was a part was going adrift. The gospel being preached was not real food. Yet it maintained a costly and superfluous establishment financed by the flock in its care, both living and dead. Many prayers went up asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and a gracious God moved him to another pasture, which was, in his case, a traditional Anglican church.

Laymen and laywomen, be assured that candidates for Holy Orders are chosen with care. We must support this process with our prayers and substance this Ember Friday and beyond. We must also pray that those already in the task of shepherding persevere in feeding their flocks with sound teaching and moral example, and support them.

Time and time again, from the New Testament until the present, God has intervened to deliver his people from poor pastures and unworthy shepherds. He will not allow his church to starve.

Your clergy are here to support and encourage you in your Lenten discipline. Pray for them and those preparing for ministry.

Deacon Thad Osborne
Holy Cross Anglican Church
Farragut, TN

Lent 1 – Saint Matthias, February 24

Morning Prayer - Psalms 15 and 24

*“Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? * or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? / Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, * and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.” (Psalm 15.1-2)*

*“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? * or who shall rise up in his holy place? / Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; * and that hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour.” (Psalm 24.3-4)*

A novena is a word that may be unfamiliar to some of us, but it simply means a nine day period of prayer for a particular object. Scripture tells of the first novena, the nine days between Jesus’ Ascension and the Day of Pentecost, when the Twelve, the Blessed Virgin, and some others remained together in prayer. The lesson for the epistle at Mass tells us that it was during this time that Peter reminded them that the defection and death of Judas had left the fellowship of the Twelve with a vacancy. The Acts of the Apostles records Peter’s proposal that “one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:21- 22). Two men were nominated, Joseph called Barsabbas who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. After prayer, the disciples cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias, who was then enrolled with the eleven. The New Testament says nothing more about Matthias after his selection.

Tradition tells us that Matthias remained with the others until after Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit. After

that, he seems to have spent a great deal of time working in Judea; then he traveled to Cappadocia (now Turkey), where it is said that he was the vital instrument in bringing many pagans to the faith. Clement of Alexandria wrote one of his most memorable lines about Matthias: “He exhausted his body by mortification to make his spirit subject to the Crucified.” There is a pious tradition that Saint Matthias was martyred in much the same manner as Christ, but his symbol in iconography is usually a lance or halberd, but no explanation is offered. His death took place about the year 50 in an ancient country south of the Caucasus Mountains, on the east coast of the Black Sea.

Matthias, like all the apostles, was chosen to become, in Peter’s words, “a witness with us of Christ’s resurrection,” which was the primary task of the new apostle. This, of course, remains the primary task of every Christian today. In words and deeds, if we “seek the things that are above,” we will be true preachers of the gospel and faithful witnesses to the love of Christ.

Psalm 15, appointed for this morning, describes what is expected of us as we follow Christ. The 24th psalm takes up the theme and amplifies it. We share this ministry to which St. Matthias was so faithful, but about whom we know so little. May we pray for God to give us the same faithfulness that Saint Matthias the Apostle lived out.

O Almighty God, who into the place of Judas didst choose thy faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the Twelve: Grant that thy Church, being delivered from false apostles, may always be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Father Richard Bugyi-Sutter

Assisting at Saint George the Martyr Anglican Church
Simpsonville, SC

Lent 2 – Sunday, February 25

Homily for Lent 2

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Matthew 15:21-28

By Saint John Chrysostom

(*Homily 52 – Anglican Breviary C226-7*)

And the gospel saith “But he answered her not a word.” What is this new and strange thing? To the Jews, in spite of their perversity, Christ seems ever to show great patience; when they blaspheme, He entreateth; when they vex him, He does not dismiss them; but to this Canaanite woman, who had received no instruction in the law or the prophets, and yet was showing such a great reverence, to such and one as this Christ does not vouchsafe so much as an answer! I suppose that even the very disciples must have been affected at the woman’s affliction, so that they were troubled, and out of heart. Nevertheless, not even in their vexation did they venture to say to him: “Grant her this favor.” Rather we read: “His disciples besought Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she crieth after us.’”

But in this connection, let us not forget how we too, when we wish to persuade anyone, do often say the exact contrary of our own wishes. [For thus the disciples could reverently call their Master’s attention to the contrast between His wonted compassion and the strangeness of his behavior toward this woman.]

Then Christ made answer: "I am not sent but on to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And there upon what did this woman do? Was she silent? Did she desist? Did she falter in her earnestness? By no means; rather, she was the more instant. But with us, it is not so; rather, when we fail at once to obtain, we desist; whereas it ought to make us the more urgent. What then saith Christ? Not even with all this was He satisfied, but He seems to make as though to perplex furthermore, saying; "It is not need to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

And thus it was that when He did finally vouch safe to speak to her, He smote her more sharply by His words than by His silence. The more urgent her entreaty, so much the more doth He urge His denial. No longer does He speak of His own people as sheep, for on the contrary He calls them children, and her He calleth a dog! What then saith the woman? Out of his own very words she maketh her plea; for it is as if she said: "Though I be a dog, yet am I not thereby cast out from thee; for along with the children, the dogs are partakers, even though it be in scanty measure, since they eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table. What then saith Christ? "Oh woman, great is thy faith!" Yea, it was for this reason that He had beforehand put her off, namely, that He might crown her as the Woman Great of the Faith!

Lent 2 – Monday, February 26

Morning Prayer - First Lesson - Genesis 27:1-29

“And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.” (Genesis 27:19)

The story of Jacob and Esau is not a tale of well-defined morality. It has no clear winners or losers; neither Jacob or Esau are perfect characters. They are twin brothers with two distinct personalities and natures. Esau is a man of the earth. He is more primal, a hunter, quick tempered, and superficial. He seems to live for the moment, concerned only with what is right in front of him. Jacob is more intellectual and calculated; he has a vision and purpose for his life though he attempts to achieve it by morally dubious means and the narrative makes no attempt to hide this.

But as in most biblical accounts, we should not remain fixated on the human individuals, but instead, look for God’s presence and purpose.

Despite the rivalry, parental favoritism, deception, and general discord, the account of Jacob and Esau testifies to a God who is continually at work within the human struggle of life. God’s working and purpose is not always plainly visible, but it is there. God does not condone deceit or trickery but does use all things for

good and His presence in the lives of these men eventually brings forth redemption, forgiveness, and ultimately, salvation.

We all have the same traits as did Jacob and Esau and they constantly fight within us; they are part of the fallen human condition, and as flawed and prone to bad decisions as we are, we can be confident in faith, of God's love, and redeeming grace toward us.

Jacob's name means Supplanter. He supplants Esau, the firstborn, and takes his birthright and Isaac's paternal blessing. Jacob took Esau's proper place in receiving Isaac's blessing, but Christ freely shares His birthright with us, and we take our proper place in receiving God the Father's blessing at our Baptism: The words of the Father spoken over Jesus, "This is My Beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased," are spoken over us also. For God loved us while we were yet sinners.

God's blessing does not necessarily remove hardship from our lives. It may at times lead us into them. Jacob would learn this and Christ was led into the desert to be tempted after His baptism. Through hardship and trial, we can learn much about our own character and the faithfulness of God in spite of our weaknesses and infirmities. We are all like these brothers in many ways. This causes me to ask which brother am I and how is God working in me in spite of myself?

Deacon Robert Shoup
Saint Patrick's Anglican Church
Brevard, NC

Lent 2 – Tuesday, February 27

Evening Prayer - Psalm 51

*“For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me.
Against Thee only have I sinned...”* (Psalm 51:3,4)

The annual observance of Lent is a microcosmic, representative exercise of what should be the overarching and ever-present posturing of our souls and bodies before God throughout the year. The Lenten way is the way of Christ in the wilderness of temptation. The Lenten fast is a weak recapitulation of the perfect forty-day abstinence of our Lord. The Lenten journey is our tracing of Christ's footsteps as He sought His Father's face in the desert and fought the wiles of the devil. Our Lenten exodus models the path of our Lord but also hearkens back to the forty-year desert wanderings of ungrateful, proud Israel who purged and paid for its sins while wandering the Deserts of Sin and Paran. Our Lenten fast is to purify us from sinfulness. Christ's desert fast was to demonstrate his purity. Our Lenten fast, like Israel's desert sojourning, displays our imperfection. Christ's desert fast displays Him as the perfect God, the perfect Man, and the perfect God-man.

The Psalm and first lesson for today's Lenten evening prayer provide us with lectionary-juxtaposed but conceptually-contrasted examples of human response to our intrinsic sin nature and resultant sinful actions. The passage from Jeremiah perfectly depicts the hubris and false self-sufficiency of the unrepentant human heart when it describes the prideful posturing of enemy-besieged Israel as it faced the exterminating, triple-threat invasion by Nineveh, Babylon, and Egypt. Despite a way of escape and promise of national preservation, Jeremiah notes that the nation of Israel “refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.”

Contrasted with Israel's stiff-necked response in Jeremiah, we find in Psalm 51 the beautiful, self-exposed heart of King David, who, unlike his future nation, was, with a broken heart and soft face, actively returning to God by confession and repentance of sin. The historical context of Psalm 51 is detailed in the subheading of the Psalm and is one of the few Psalm backstories that we know. The valiant, comely, musician-warrior David who was chosen by God for kingship was “prudent in matters” (1 Samuel 16), “behaved himself wisely in all his ways” (1 Samuel 18), and was extolled by God as “a man after Mine own heart” (1 Samuel 13). Nonetheless, after surviving a perilous manhunt by the dethroned Saul and establishing his kingly rule, he nearly sacrificed everything for the illicit, transient pleasure of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. And, yet, seemingly long before the parabolically delivered condemnation of Nathan the prophet (“Thou art the man!”), David suffered greatly from the spiritual and physical misery of his festering sin: “When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me” (Psalms 32).

During this Lenten season, while “It’s true, we cannot reach Christ’s forti’th day; yet to go part of that religious way is better than to rest” (Herbert). Lent is not a time of perfection but of humility and growth. Lent is about forsaking ourselves and running after God. During this Lenten season, may we spurn sin and self and reject the hard heart and stony face of the nation Israel while modeling ourselves on the imperfect but soft-hearted David and on the perfect model of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Doctor Eric Byrd
Seminarian at All Saints Anglican Church
Mills River, NC

Lent 2 – Wednesday, February 28

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - St. John 11:1-16

“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”

(St. John 11:14-15)

One mystery we contemplate during Lent is the mystery of redeemed suffering. In the lesson today, we read our Lord tells the disciples that he is glad, for their sake, that he wasn't there with Lazarus to prevent Lazarus from dying. That is not something we think about often! Jesus was glad that he wasn't present to prevent the suffering of a very close friend. It makes you wonder if we are talking about the same Jesus. But he explains why this makes him glad, “to the intent ye may believe.”

Our Lord's Passion and Death, which is so much on our mind during this time of year, was not to the intent that we should not suffer. Rather, it is to the intent that through suffering, we may believe. Christ, through his Holy Cross, redeems suffering. He doesn't end it, at least yet. Ultimately, suffering will be ended, but we aren't there yet. And Jesus can use our suffering to increase our faith, “to the intent ye may believe.”

When we suffer, and every human being suffers; rich, poor, old, and young; we can have that suffering redeemed when we offer it to Christ on his Holy Cross. Because of Christ's Passion (suffering) our own suffering can have

redemptive value. It can mean something, when by God's grace our suffering is united to the suffering of Christ.

Our Lord used Lazarus' suffering, his death, to be a witness to God's grace for others. That Lazarus died brought grace to others, even to us this day, as we read about his death. Suffering has redemptive value when that suffering, by faith, is a holy sacrifice offered to God.

When we have a physical ailment, a spiritual ailment, an emotion ailment, or psychological ailment, these are all natural conditions of being a human being. Everyone hurts, but it is only God who redeems that pain for his own glory and for the redemption of others.

When we as Christians glory in the Cross of Christ, we celebrate God's suffering for us. And through his suffering, we are redeemed. And our own suffering is redeemed and united to the Cross and brings about more grace into the world. It is a witness to the world of God's goodness when we endure suffering and still give glory to God.

Lazarus' pain and suffering was a foreshadowing of our Lord's own passion and Death. And Jesus was glad that Lazarus went through that, in order that others could be pointed to Jesus' own Cross.

Our prayer, when suffering, is that like Lazarus, Jesus will use our suffering to draw us closer to him, and to even draw others closer to him.

Father Matthew Harlow
Rector of Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church
Fort Valley, GA

Lent 2 – Thursday, February 29

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - John 11:17-27

“I am the resurrection, and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (St. John 11:25-26)

When we received ashes upon our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, these words were said to us: “Remember O man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.” This phrase comes from the book of Genesis, when God revealed to Adam the consequences of his sin in the Garden of Eden. Mary and Martha were surely feeling the gravity of this curse when their brother Lazarus died. If only Jesus had arrived sooner, Lazarus would have continued walking the earth. Martha made sure to tell Jesus those words when he arrived at Bethany, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” But, rather than stopping at that thought she continues, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” In a moment of self-consolation, Martha attempts to assuage her current grief with the belief in the general resurrection at the end of days.

Jesus, aware of her grief, speaks words of new hope, “I am the resurrection, and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” With these words Jesus tells Martha

that she doesn't need to place her hope in the distant future. Her hope can be found today in Jesus Christ. Jesus ends his statement of new hope with an exhortation for belief. Martha does believe, and is given the greatest sign of hope—the resurrection of her beloved brother. What she expected to happen long in the future happened right there in Bethany.

Many of us are tempted to lose hope in the life we have in Jesus Christ. Living in this world can cause us to hope only in the future, when we die and go to be with God. It is true that this will take place. But we must not forget what Jesus told Martha in Bethany, “I am the resurrection, and the life.” Do we believe in this? While it is fitting that we reflect on our own mortality in the season of lent, it is only a season. In the midst of lent, the lectionary gives us a glimmer of hope we can have right now. Friends, Easter is quickly approaching. The resurrection of Christ is not some fact we store away in our brains. The resurrection of Jesus is a sign of our own resurrection, where we will see Him face to face. In our baptism we were given the life of God. When we receive the Holy Eucharist we have a foretaste of that marriage supper we have with the Lamb of God. Let us live and believe in him now, for we shall never die. Let us believe in Jesus Christ, our resurrection and our life.

Deacon Ian Jarrells

Deacon in Charge at Saint Thomas Anglican Church
Alto, GA

Lent 2 – Friday, March 1

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - St. John 11:28-44

“Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”

(St. John 11:40)

He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3)—the God that cried. St. John’s very poignant and personal testimony of Christ’s raising Lazarus from the dead portrays Our Lord at His most Human and His most Divine. Twice, John mentions that Jesus groans within Himself and is troubled. First, it is in response to Mary’s grief (“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”, 11:32) and the mourners’ lamentation; and then later, when He faces the reality of Lazarus’ death before his tomb. It makes Jesus weep! Although He is, according to Martha’s prior confession, “the Christ, the Son of God” (11:27), He is also a family friend; He empathizes with their loss. Jesus feels their human sorrow and sheds tears in solidarity with their own. And yet, He prays to God...as God. St. John, the Evangelist of Our Lord’s Divinity, shares another intimate exchange within the Godhead as Jesus prays, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me...I said it, that [the people] may believe that thou hast sent me” (11:41-42). St. John is fulfilling what he promised to prove in his Prologue: Christ is ‘the Word made flesh [who] dwelt among us, because He is ‘the only begotten of the Father’ (1:14). Eleven chapters later, John delivers again: through the incarnate God-Man we behold the glory of God.

Indeed, “Lazarus, come forth” is one of Christ’s most glorious demonstrations in the Gospels. When Jesus presents that He possesses power over death itself, He not only reveals Who He is but what He came to accomplish. “In him

was life; and the life was the light of men” (1:4). His mission is predicated on His identity. Jesus didn’t come to only work miracles with temporary benefit; He came that “whosoever believeth in him should...have everlasting life” (3:16). Lazarus would die again; but Jesus offers his phenomenal reprieve as a prelude to a miraculous Resurrection with eternal benefit—His!

This is why we read this episode, which likely transpired shortly before Holy Week, during Lent. Lazarus’ resurrection foreshadows that the entire trajectory of this season points toward Christ’s own confrontation with death and the grave through His Passion and Burial. After a Lenten wilderness retreat of wrestling with our sins and fighting temptation, we will see Christ challenge their power. As articulated in this evening’s Psalm (69), Jesus enters our anguish at Calvary, but to take away the dread of death and to fulfill our hope of Divine Mercy,

“Let not...the pit shut her mouth upon me...turn thee unto me according to the multitude of thy mercies...They gave me gall to eat; and when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink... when I am poor and in heaviness, thy help, O God, shall lift me up...”

During Lent, we may find ourselves forlorn like Martha and Mary, mourning mortality and the ache of fallen existence to which we have also contributed by “our faults... our own most grievous faults.” We are hurt, but hopeful. Even when the Lord’s assistance seems slow in coming and our hearts feel broken, our faith must assure us that He is always near with grace and comfort. Our loving Lord Jesus not only has compassion on our grief but is ready to show us the glory of God—in both life and in death!

Father Daniel Trout
Rector of Saint Barnabas Anglican Church
Dunwoody, GA

Lent 2 – Saturday, March 2

Evening Prayer - First Lesson – Jeremiah 6:9-21

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

Lent is nothing if it isn't about moving progressively, by Grace, towards and into the forgiveness of sins. That so many Christians don't make it might explain why our churches are empty during Holy Week and on Good Friday. The forgiveness of sins seems to be something that we would, at best, forget about and, at worst, ignore. We do so to our own eternal peril. The forgiveness of sins is both who and what the Word made flesh that dwelt among us, Jesus Christ, is all about.

Of course, neither Christian nor pagan will ever get around to discovering the need for the forgiveness of sins until he hits his own respective rock bottom. And it would appear that in these late and dangerous days, the proverbial pagan is more likely to do so. Long gone is the time when Christians took seriously their own dire need of the forgiveness of sins. Churches seem full of good people. Self-consciously good enough, that is. Today's pagan is, no doubt, horrifically sinful and so immersed in a sin that he wouldn't ever recognize were it not for one fact. He is still human – oh, so very human. As such, this will probably work to his benefit. Provided he doesn't kill himself once he hits the rock bottom condition of his own unhappiness, our pagan stands to teach us all quite a bit of good.

Martin Luther once said something like, if you are going to sin, sin big. Luther wasn't advocating willful sin against Aristotle's good of the intellect, or the known truth. Rather, he meant let your sin be bold, clear, present, real, and not imaginary to your conscience. Know what your sin is and what it does, he implied. Know that your sin kills the Word of God in the Flesh, Jesus Christ. Obviously, he would have concurred with the Fathers of the Church and the Medieval Doctors in concluding that our sin is committed by Christian and Pagan alike. The point is that if we do not know what our sin is and what it attempts to do to human life, we shall never need the forgiveness of sins – of our sins.

Back to our pagan. The fact of the matter is that pagans (and lukewarm Christians, for that matter) are sinning in ways they used to but with this added difference. For the better part of two thousand years, in what we call the Latin Christian West, pagans and bad Christians attempted to conceal their sin from the scrutiny of prevailing morality. Now there is no need. Christians who have not needed the forgiveness of sins or to be forgiven have been complicit in the destruction of their civilization. Perhaps our fellow men, the pagans, if they have the courage to live on and reveal what sin has done to them, might very well set us back onto the road of self-knowledge. "Know thyself," the great Oracle at Delphi once commanded thoughtful Greek pagans. Christian self-knowledge demands the forgiveness of sins – where Heaven meets Earth in the Person of the New Adam, Jesus Christ, and the hope of freedom from sin might once again be remembered and received with all humility.

Father William Martin

Rector of Saint Michael and All Angels Anglican Church
Arden, NC

Lent 3 – Sunday, March 3

Homily for Lent 3

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Luke 11:14-28

by The Venerable Bede

(Anglican Breviary C239-230)

Matthew saith that the devil, by which this poor creature was possessed, was not only dumb, but also blind; and that, when the possessed was healed by the Lord, he both saw and spake. Three miracles, therefore, were performed on this one man; the blind saw, the dumb spake, and the possessed was freed from the devil.

This mighty work was then done in the flesh, but is now fulfilled spiritually every time men are converted and become believers. For from them the devil is cast out, and their eyes are given to see the light of the Faith, and their lips, which before were dumb, are opened that their mouth may shew forth the praise of God. But some of them said: He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. It was not some of the multitude that uttered this slander, but Pharisees and scribes, as we are told by the other Evangelists.

The multitude, which was made up of such as had little instruction, was filled with wonder at the works of the Lord. But the Pharisees and scribes, on the other hand, denied the facts when they could; and when they could not, they twisted them by an evil interpretation, and

asserted that the works of God were the works of an unclean spirit. And Matthew saith: Others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. It would seem that they desired him to do some such thing as Elias did, who called down fire from heaven; or like as Samuel, who caused thunder to roll, and lightning to flash, and rain to fall at midsummer: as though they could not have explained away these signs also, as being the natural result of some unusual, albeit hitherto unremarked, state of the atmosphere. O thou who stubbornly deniest that which thine eye seeth, thine hand holdeth, and thy sense perceiveth, what wilt thou say to a sign from heaven? Verily, thou wilt say that divers signs from heaven were once also wrought even by the sorcerers in Egypt.

But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to a desolation, and an house divided against an house falleth. Thus did he make answer, not to their words, but to their thoughts, in hopes that they might at least believe in the power of him who seeth the secrets of the heart. But if every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, it followeth that the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which same is to abide in everlasting steadfastness, is not a divided kingdom. Wherefore we hold, without fear of contradiction, that it never can be brought to desolation by any shock whatsoever. But, saith the Lord, if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because ye say that I cast out devils by Beelzebub. In saying this, he sought to draw from their own mouth a confession that they had chosen for themselves to be part of that devil's kingdom which, if it be divided against itself, cannot stand.

Lent 3 – Monday, March 4

Evening Prayer - Psalm 71

“In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion...” (Psalm 71:1)

The psalm for this evening is one that was most likely written by King David, and, as is his usual manner, he pleads to the Lord for deliverance, for escape, for refuge, and for resort. He declares that God is his rock and his fortress. And for all of these things, David says that he will continue to praise the Lord and glory in Him “all the day” (v. 8).

This is what this indispensable season of penitence should be about for each of us: focusing on the Lord and following Him rather than sticking to our own ways of doing things. When we focus on the Lord and His Will, His Way, the pieces of our lives begin to come together. Perhaps we cannot yet see the design that the puzzle of our lives will make, but God continues to work on us – forming us through the Word, prayer, and the Sacrament – into something special for His purpose. We may only see that a couple of corner pieces and a few other groupings are in the right place, but God knows what He is doing and we need to rely on Him to build us in His image.

We need to trust God rather than trying to rely on ourselves.

The passage from Jeremiah 7 reminds us that when we say that we trust in God, we had better do things His Way. God is not an addendum to our lives. Christianity – which He has given us in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

Church – is not a condiment to add to the main course of existence. Rather, God is to take centerstage; He is to be our priority and the foundation of all that we do.

If we are at work, we work as unto the Lord. If we are with our friends and family, we fellowship as unto the Lord. If we are at home relaxing, we do so in such a manner as unto the Lord.

And as we grow in the Lord, our demonstrations and actions of love for God and for our neighbors increase. The journey of sanctification is truly a process, one that we need to cherish through this Lenten season.

May we continue to ask the Lord for His strength and guidance, seek Him in His Word and in worship, and knock at the spiritual doors before us as we endeavor to learn and grow. And may we be inquisitive like the Rich Young Ruler from the second lesson found in the Gospel according to St. Mark, but may we also have the perseverance and willingness to press on according to God's direction. His Way only becomes clear and feasible through continual supplication and devotion to the Lord.

This Wednesday marks the third Wednesday of Lent... and we only have three more Wednesdays after that. Let us use the time we have been given wisely, focusing on the Lord and what He is trying to accomplish through His obedient servants as we prepare for Holy Week.

Father Stephen Miller
Rector of St. Matthias Anglican Church
Dothan, AL

Lent 3 – Tuesday, March 5

Evening Prayer - First Lesson - Jeremiah 7:21-29

“But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.”

(Jeremiah 7:23-24)

It is a poignant thing to recognize that Jeremiah’s ministry was to obey a command by God to preach repentance and warning of judgment with full knowledge that his message would fall on deaf ears. The prophet’s ministry was in the final years of the kingdom of Judah, who had disobeyed the commandments of God. By the end of Jeremiah’s ministry, the nation’s independence would be gone, and the city and the temple would be destroyed.

We read in Jeremiah 20:2 that he was beaten and put in the stocks, which puts our own ascetic Lenten practices into a sharper focus relative to what so many others have endured for the preaching of God’s word.

In our lesson from Evening Prayer today, God reiterates his command to his people to obey him and his promise of that special bond between them – that he will be their God and they would be his people. But the people have disobeyed and done what they wished instead.

As the body of Christ in his Church, we can see the parallels of our own situation. God had made a special covenant with his people which they rebelled against.

Through the sacrament of holy baptism, we too are brought into the Church and into covenant union with God also. Like the nation of Judah, we all too often, as we confess in our Prayer Book, have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts, and have offended against God's holy laws.

The penitential practices of the Lenten season are beneficial to us as they remind us of our sin and of our need for reconciliation with God. The contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous becomes starker. By going to the sanctuary of God we understand this clearer (Psalm 73:17). An increasing recognition of our sin and of the holiness of God is part of the growth of the Christian life. But that increasing knowledge should not lead us to despair. Instead, we look to what God, who has called us to be his own, has done for us.

As we reflect on our Lenten disciplines, we remember that our Lord Jesus Christ fasted in the desert forty days for us. As we repent of our failures to obey, we remember that Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience. And as we realize our failure so often to live as those in covenant with God, we remember that Jesus Christ has reconciled us to the father through the wonder of the cross and the resurrection.

In our second lesson for tonight Jesus says "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, he has made possible the promise that he will be our God and we will be his people and it is made real to us.

Father J. Alex Marlowe
Curate of All Saints Anglican Parish
Wilmington, NC

Lent 3 – Wednesday, March 6

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - St. Mark 10:46ff

“And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.”
(Mark 10:50)

Christ intentionally begins his final ascent to Jerusalem—really his ascent to Calvary—by relocating to the trans-Jordan, east of the holy city, and making His final approach along the road to Jericho. This route will take him past the site of His own baptism by St. John, and it follows the march of Joshua in the Old Testament as he led the armies of Israel into the promised land. Beyond the Jordan and along the way Jesus is confronted with the blindness of human sin—the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees who dispute with him about divorce (10:2-12); the vainglorious pride of his own disciples who think themselves “superior” to children in the eyes of God (10:13-16); the love of riches which impedes the ‘rich young ruler’ (10:17-31); the bickering and jockeying for position amongst the twelve, who simply fail to understand the nature of Christ’s priesthood, which he is going up to Jerusalem to demonstrate—the true nature and cost of leadership in the kingdom of God (10:32-45).

It is the blindness of human sin that must be conquered if this kingdom is to be established, and it is fitting that, as He leaves Jericho—where the walls of ancient Canaan fell by the hand of God, and the conquest of the promised land was begun—an opportunity for a miraculous healing presents itself.

In a very real sense, however, it is Bartimaeus the blind beggar who has the keenest spiritual vision of all the men with whom Christ has had to deal on His way to the cross. His poverty and disability provide no barrier to the light of

the gospel—no mental gymnastics, no pride, no wealth, no lust for power or status. Bartimaeus' humiliation is complete. Deprived of man's most useful faculty, as "useless" to his fellows as an infant, reduced to an utter dependence on charity, he recognizes in the person of Jesus the King and Healer of mankind. He cries out and will not be silenced until the Son of David grants him audience. When it is granted, Bartimaeus casts away his outer garment—likely his most necessary possession and only protection against the elements—in order that nothing might impede his progress toward the Savior.

Though all the preceding episodes in the tenth chapter of Mark present instances of spiritual blindness, Bartimaeus is most striking in relation to the 'rich young ruler.' The blind beggar forsakes what little he has for the sake of healing. It is not much to discard—there are no impediments to his faith, because he has nowhere else to turn. It is that faith—unreserved, undeserving, yet refusing to be turned aside or away—that seems a mysterious precondition for the working of Christ's grace (cf. Mk. 6: 1-6). Though it is Divine power that heals his blindness, it is striking that Jesus says of this faith that it has 'made you well,' (or 'has saved you,' in some translations). And the blind man—now seeing—follows Jesus on the road, unlike the rich man who went away sorrowful.

The season of Lent, with its fasting and devotions, is an attempt to strengthen and refine our faith by removing its obstacles—pretensions, boastings, cares, and desires that impede our approach to Christ; only thus do we receive true sight. Let us also rise, cast aside those garments, and follow Him to Calvary.

Father Peter Joselyn
Curate of Saint Alban's Cathedral
Oviedo, FL

Lent 3 – Thursday, March 7

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson –Mark 11:12-26

“And Jesus went into the temple and began to cast them out that sold and bought.” (Mark 11:15)

For eight years I cultivated an apple tree. It grew large and was covered with beautiful leaves, yet in all that time it never produced a single apple. An apple tree that does not grow apples has no place on a farm, so I cut it down and replaced it. In its first year the tiny fig tree produced three figs. It is already fulfilling the purpose for which I planted it. Fruit.

Fruit trees have two purposes. On the fourth day of creation, God created fruit trees with a clear purpose: to bear “fruit in which is the seed after their own kind” that they might “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” What is more, God gave the fruit of the trees as food to mankind, that humanity might flourish.

The fig tree encountered by the hungry Jesus failed in both regards. And so, that leafy but fig-less tree was found useless.

Mankind also has two purposes. On the sixth day of creation, God created man in his own image and after his likeness. Then God blessed mankind to bear his image into the world and, after his likeness, exercise dominion that God’s creation might flourish.

That is our purpose. To multiply the image of God and cause the earth to flourish. There is the rub. Like the fig

tree, we, too, have failed to live out our creation purpose. Like that cursed tree, we may have signs of life (many beautiful “leaves”), or like the Temple when Jesus cleansed it, we might be very busy, yet these are not the purposes of a fig tree or a Temple.

So, a solemn warning comes into view. As a fig-less fig tree is ready to be cut down; as a prayer-less Temple is ready to be razed; so a human being who will not bear faithfully and fruitfully the image of God is in danger of the judgment of him who cursed a tree and it withered to the root.

Of course, one might reasonably object: How can the tree be accountable when it wasn't the season for figs? Wisdom, then, remembers the words of St. Paul, “Be ready! In season and out of season.” It is always the right season to fulfill the purpose for which God created us.

With such a sober Gospel reading in the middle of somber Lent, we might be discouraged. Therefore, along with this Gospel warning, the Church has us read the hopeful Psalm 85. “Wilt thou not turn again and quicken us, that thy people may rejoice in thee?” The same Lord who has the power to wither a tree has the power to turn around and enliven it, restore it, resurrect it. Resurrect us.

Are we fulfilling our purpose as human beings, bearing God's image for the flourishing of his creations? Let us pray that God will turn again, and quicken us. For this we are created.

Father Bradley Cunningham
Rector of Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Fernandina Beach, FL

Lent 3 – Friday, March 8

Morning Prayer, Second Lesson - 1 Corinthians 11:17ff

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” (1 Corinthians 11:28)

The Holy Communion is the source and summit of the Christian life: our Daily Bread is participating in the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For this purpose, the Book of Common Prayer gives us an order for the Consecration of the Gifts of Bread and Wine so that we may receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord. The Book of Common Prayer expects that Holy Communion follows Morning Prayer, that Holy Communion is the purpose for which we have been preparing by meditating on Holy Scripture and that Holy Communion happens within the context of regular observation of the Office. The center of the Missal is the Order for Holy Communion, and in fact the Mass is given in the context of Holy Thursday, the Institution of the Holy Communion. So where do we find the Order for Holy Communion in the words of Scripture themselves?

In the Second Lesson at Morning Prayer today, Saint Paul tells us how the Lord celebrated that First Holy Communion at the Last Supper with His apostles on the night before He was offered, or rather offered himself, as a sacrifice for us. These words of institution are those words which are said over the Bread and Wine every Mass. These are beautiful, straightforward words, words that are vital to our sacramental union with the Lord—and Saint Paul

addresses these words to people who were disregarding the Feast, not to people keeping the Feast in pureness and holiness. That the Apostle chooses this time to communicate this message tells us both the point of the Communion and the point of Lent. Saint Paul, our Father among the saints, gives us an opportunity for repentance, if we would listen to the intent of the Heavenly Banquet.

The Holy Communion is “to proclaim the Lord’s Death until His coming again.” Jesus died, and dead men ordinarily are gone forever; this dead Man is coming again. His coming again will be the glory of the breaking of tombs, the binding of death, the banishment of sin. We eat this food as a means of testifying to this faith. If we in our celebration of the Holy Communion lose this proclamation –through inattention, through “majoring on the minors,” through being satisfied with external beauty for the sake of show rather than meditating on the gift of God–then we are eating and drinking damnation unto ourselves. Lent is one of those great “re-setting” periods of the year when we can ask ourselves any number of questions regarding our attention to God. Consider today the attention to the proclamation made by Saint Paul: is my participation in the Holy Communion proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes? Am I here in my devotional life during the week preparing to proclaim the Lord in the Sunday Mass? And am I willing to receive God’s humble correction when I am attempting to proclaim my own devotion rather than the goodness of the Lord? May God grant us strength to continue the Fast in obedience and humility.

Father Raymond Davison
Curate of Saint Paul’s Anglican Church
Melbourne, FL

Lent 3 – Saturday, March 9

Evening Prayer - Psalm 103

In the 103rd Psalm we find the following promise: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12, King James Version). With such a promise, it is difficult to understand why at times, if not often, we have and do experience a reluctance to bring some, if not many of our transgressions, to the attention of God, that is, to confess them. Even though we acknowledge that “all hearts are open, all desires are known, and ... no secrets are hid” from God (Book of Common Prayer), nevertheless, in a way analogous to Adam and Eve in the Garden, we hide from God by not confessing our sin. Why think that we are or might be different from Adam and Eve?

A compelling explanation for our reluctance to confess at least, some of our sins, is that “the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable” (BCP). God seems too holy to bring our grievous and intolerable sins to His attention; after all, what might God think of us? No doubt in part we find our sin grievous and intolerable because we experience our sin corrupting and diminishing our emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being as well as our fellowship with Christ Jesus and with others. We not only feel accused and condemned, but we find ourselves focusing on this accusation and condemnation. Such focus, in part, is a manifestation of our misunderstandings, hurried lives, frustrations, or our impatience, the very conditions in which we lose and fail at the struggle against our sinful dispositions and inclinations.

A young grandson was visiting his grandparents and was given his first slingshot. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit his target. As he came back to his grandparent’s back yard, he spied his grandmother’s pet duck. On an impulse, he took aim and let fly. The stone hit the mark, and the duck fell dead.

The boy panicked. In desperation he hid the dead duck in a woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all, but she said nothing. After lunch that day, the grandmother said, “Sally, let’s wash the dishes.” But Sally replied, “Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you, Johnny?” And she whispered to him, “Remember the duck!” So Johnny did the dishes.

After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally’s as she repeatedly reminded him of the duck, he couldn’t stand it any longer. He confessed to his grandmother that he had killed the duck. “I know, Johnny,” the grandmother replied, giving him a hug. “I was standing at the window and I saw the whole thing. I forgave you at that very moment because I love you. I wondered how long you would allow Sally to make you a slave.”

Knowing that sin enslaves us and God’s promise that forgiveness liberates us from our transgressions, we are given the assurance that “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 8:1-11, KJV)! This promise of grace does not make our sin less grievous or less intolerable, but it assures us that in Christ Jesus the penitent is liberated from the accusation and condemnation of sin for God has promised that the penitent will receive forgiveness of iniquity, that God will put the iniquity far from the penitent, and that God will remember our transgressions no more (Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17; Micah 7:19; Isaiah 44:27).

With the promise of gracious forgiveness and the promise to remove the transgressions of the penitent as far as the east is from the west, during this season of Lent we, the baptized who have been raised with Christ to a life liberated from accusation and condemnation, can boldly yearn for, run to, and embrace God’s loyal, pardoning love with the assurance that God will remember our confessed sins no more.

Father Daniel D. Rieger
Curate of Saint Mary the Virgin Anglican Church
Delray Beach, FL

Lent 4 – Sunday, March 10

Homily for Lent 4

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – John 6:1-14

by Saint Augustine of Hippo

(*Tractate 24 on John*, Anglican Breviary C253-4)

The miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ were verily divine works, and they stir up the mind of man to rise by a perception of what is seen by the eye unto an apprehension of God himself. For God is of such substance as eye cannot see, and the many miracles which He doth work in his continual rule of the whole universe, and in his providential care of everything which he has made, are by use become so common that scarce anyone permitteth himself to perceive the same, as for example, what wondrous and amazing works of God there be in every grain of seed. Wherefore His mercy hath constrained Him to keep some works to be done only at some convenient time, as it were, out of the common course and order of nature, to the intent that men may see them and wonder, not because they be greater, but because they be rarer, than those which they so lightly esteem by reason of their daily occurrence.

For to govern the whole universe is surely a greater miracle than to satisfy five thousand men with five loaves of bread. At the former works no man doth marvel, yet at the feeding of the five thousand, all men

do marvel, not because it is a greater miracle than the other, but because it is a rarer one. For who is He that now feed it the whole world? Is it not that same who, from a little grain that is sown, maketh the fulness of the harvest? God worketh in both cases in one and the same manner. He that over the sowing maketh to come the harvest, is the same that took in His hands five barley loaves, and of them made bread to feed five thousand men. For the hands of Christ have the power to do both the one and the other. He that multiplieth the grains of corn is the same that multiplied the loaves, save only that in this latter case He committed them not into the earth whereof He is Himself the maker.

Therefore this miracle is done outwardly before us, that our souls inwardly may thereby be quickened. The same is shown to our eyes to furnish food for thought. Thus by means of those of his works which are seen, we may come to feel awe toward Him that cannot be seen. Perchance we may thereby be roused up to believe, and if we attain unto belief, we shall be purified to such a good purpose that we shall begin to long to see him. Wherefore, in such wise, through the things which are seen, we may come to know Him that cannot be seen. Yet it suffices not if we perceive only this one meaning in Christ's miracles. Rather let us ask of the miracles themselves what they have to tell us concerning Christ; for in all truth they speak with a tongue of their own, if only we have goodwill to understand the same. For Christ is the Word of God, and each and every work of the Word speaketh a word to us.

Lent 4 – Monday, March 11

Morning Prayer - Psalm 90

“Lord, thou has been our refuge, from one generation to another.... But who regardest the power of thy wrath? Or feareth aright thy indignation?” (Psalm 90: 1, 11)

Along with our Psalm appointed for morning prayer today, the “1928 Book of Common Prayer” uses Psalm 90 in the Order for the Burial of the Dead, as it deals with the reality of our mortality as it focuses on the glorious promises of God to take care of us while cautioning the reader on the reality of God’s complete hatred of sin.

As Christians, we most assuredly won salvation through Christ Jesus. He is our refuge from eternal punishment and Hell. For that great gift, we are thankful.

Sometimes, however, we seem to take this grace for granted and simply live our lives how we “want” to live them, instead of paying attention to the call to righteousness each day. We casually fall into worldly ways of thinking. We seek personal pleasure and satisfaction over spending time with the Lord in prayer and self-giving. Indubitably, we do not do this on purpose, but the cares of this world rise into prominence in our lives, distracting us from the most important Being in our lives.

During Lent, we strive to address our sinful tendencies and turn back to our inviolable God who will not bear to have evil in His presence. Paul mentions in Philippians how we are to work out our salvation with “fear and trembling.” Through faith, salvation attends us, but if we reject the

Christ's gift through selfishness and pride, we separate ourselves from the very font of hope and face wrath of our Almighty God.

Today is the twenty-third day of Lent (not counting Sundays). We're just over the half-way mark of our Lenten fast. If things have fallen a bit short in our intentions, we need not give up but be renewed by the fact that our refuge has promised us life in Himself. Let us take time today to pray earnestly for His grace and peace to strengthen and guide us through this communal Lenten journey of self-denial while we trust in His providence – even when our intentional sacrifices becomes burdensome and tiring. Let us focus on honoring our perfect Lord who despises wickedness in all its forms, remembering His great passion for righteousness.

This special season compels us to find ways to offer godly kindness, generosity, and love. By spending more time in prayer specifically offering praise and thanksgiving for His great mercies and by giving of our time and resources to our church and community, we place ourselves in positions of utter dependence upon our Heavenly Father who will lead us to opportunities to show His love to those around us. Let us pray for our neighbors' needs whole-heartedly in hopes the grace and peace of God fill their lives with joy, hope, healing, and love. As we engage with the Lord and offer our entire lives to Him, our witness will grow.

Father Kenneth R. Bailey, Jr.
Rector of Saint Matthew's Anglican Church
Riverview, FL

Lent 4 – Tuesday, March 12

Evening Prayer - First Lesson - Jeremiah 14: 1-10

“Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.” (Jeremiah 14: 10)

There is no sugar coating today’s brutal reading from Jeremiah. An unprecedented drought devastates early sixth-century BC Judah, and a sinful people turn to Jeremiah and the God he serves for relief from their plight. Written in the form of a lament, the prophet begs the LORD to forgive the people’s sins. Yet despite Jeremiah’s pleas for mercy, the LORD refuses to hear their cries. Were we to read only these verses and those immediately following, we might conclude that God is so enraged with the backsliding of Judeans that he has finally decided they are beyond redemption.

In verse 10, Jeremiah notes that God no longer refers to Judah as “my people” as he does in Exodus and elsewhere throughout the Hebrew scriptures. Now the LORD characterizes them as “this people.” Here the prophet underscores the LORD’s rejection of the people and the repentance they profess. God’s covenant with them is shattered, and the people are to blame.

We Christians struggle with hardscrabble scriptures like this one. We acknowledge that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1: 9). Yet in our text for the day, in response to their confession of their sins, the LORD declares to “this people,” the people of Judah, that he “doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.”

The people of Judah had indeed fallen deeply into sin. They had abandoned the One true LORD pursuing instead Ba’al, the Canaanite God of fertility. Over time, they leaned almost exclusively on Ba’al for protection from calamities like flooding or drought. Now, with an historic drought raging, Ba’al had

failed them, and the people thought they might want to hedge their bets by asking the LORD of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses to send the rain Ba'al hadn't.

Here we see that the problem is not with God and His capacity to forgive and shed mercy upon those who have sinned against him. The problem lies not with the LORD, who had for centuries lavished his mercy upon them, but with the repentance of "this people." Their repentance is insincere. They turn to God in the same way, for decades, they turned to their idol. Ba'al, they thought, worked out well for them until he didn't. When Ba'al no longer performed for them, they relented and meandered back to that which they reckoned might work out more successfully. They turned to the living God, not with sincere repentance for their sins, but as a talisman, as though he who in fact loved them might provide better services than the the Canaanite god. The LORD could not answer the godly Jeremiah's cries for help and mercy because the people he served remained unwilling to capitulate, to recognize and fall on their faces before the sovereign LORD.

The people of Judah would suffer greatly over the following decades, and yet their suffering would finally help them recognize that God, "their God" was sovereign LORD and not the last-resort idol they made of him. And, yes, the faithful, loving LORD whom we are called to obey today did indeed forgive them when they were at last willing to confess and repent of their sins.

Today and throughout Lent, Jeremiah challenges us to ask ourselves: "Is God the sovereign LORD of our lives or have we, like the Judaens, approached him from time to time superstitiously like a divine rabbit's foot or horseshoe over our door?" The LORD who loved us so lavishly that he sent to us that which is of the greatest value in all His universe to redeem us, Christ Jesus, His Son, beckons us to love and trust him in return.

Father Briane Turley
The Community of St. John the Baptist
Lewisburg, WV

Lent 4 – Wednesday, March 13

Evening Prayer, Second Lesson – Mark 12:38-44

“... this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury...” (Mark 12:43)

Lent should strip away our pretenses about who we are. We all received the same ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday as a token of our mortality. We are all mortal because we are all sinners. Ash Wednesday calls us to reckon with the fact that we will all eventually die, and there is no pretense through which death does not cut.

So we find Jesus at the Temple in the second lesson of Evensong appointed for this day (Mark 12:38-44). He points out the Scribes and all of their pretenses – their long flowing robes, their love of being greeted in the marketplace, and their love of chief seats in the synagogues and at feasts – all giving a pious veneer to their moral and spiritual rot.

Those things which should have distinguished their sacred vocation, they loved for themselves. They leveraged their office to “devour widows’ houses” under religious pretense once those women lost their natural protectors in their husbands. These Scribes feigned observance of the Law but then “devoured” the remaining wealth of these widows needed for their own care and maintenance. Pretension is bad, but pretension in the name of God is far worse.

So as Jesus and His disciples observe the treasury in the Temple, He points out the offering of a widow. Perhaps she was one of the victims of the religious predations of the Scribes that Jesus spoke of beforehand. However, in spite of her poverty, she gave to God. The amount she gave, while insignificant compared to the amounts of the Scribes, was far more valuable in the sight of God. The Scribes and religious leaders gave out of their wealth. They gave to demonstrate to one another their own supposed sanctity. They gave to show how much better they were than the previous donor at the box. The widow, on the other hand, gave out of her poverty. She gave with no pretense. She gave simply for the love of God, and God honored her gift.

God gives us Lent so that He might strip away the pretense from our spiritual lives. Lent helps us to recognize our own great poverty, and humbly turn back to God. How silly would it be if we, in our spiritual rags, began to brag about the frequency of our prayers or the amount of alms we give? How silly would it be if we held our noses in the air and judged the fasting of a fellow Christian? The problem with pretense, especially religious pretense, is that it prevents us from recognizing our own spiritual poverty. The widow knew herself and gave quietly and humbly. May we all have such self-knowledge that we turn and cry out to the Lord for grace, so that when death comes to strip away our own pretenses, it finds nothing but a soul purified by the grace of God.

Father Brian Oldfield
Rector of Saint Paul's Anglican Church
Melbourne, FL

Lent 4 – Thursday, March 14

Morning Prayer - First Lesson - Genesis 49:33-50:26

“And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.”

(Genesis 49:33)

In Genesis 49:33 the amazing life of the patriarch Jacob draws to a close. After blessing his sons we read that “he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.” His son Joseph –who was something like the ‘prime minister’ of Egypt– personally oversaw the embalming of his corpse, its translation to the land of Canaan, and then its burial. All of this was a huge affair, as we see in verses 7-13.

But why did Joseph and company go through all of trouble of burying Jacob far away in the land of Canaan whence he came? Could he not have had a massive, stately tomb built for him there in Egypt that would stand for thousands and thousands of years? Why didn’t Joseph honor his father in that way, choosing instead to bury him in a cave thousands of miles away? The answer is very simple. Joseph did all of that because he was a man of integrity. The word ‘integrity’ is variously defined as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness; being whole and undivided; and lacking corruption.”

In 50:5-6 we read that Jacob commanded his son to bury him in the Promised Land. And Joseph honored that command. That showed that he was a man of integrity. In

fact, if we look back at his life story up until this point, we see that he was always a man of integrity: from when he was a young man serving his father; from when he shared the dreams God gave to him to his family; from when he served Potiphar and later Pharaoh, and then later the entire nation of Egypt as governor; from when he saved the people of Israel by bringing them to Egypt; and from when he forgave and took care of his brothers who had betrayed him many years earlier.

God calls all of his children, in all times and places, to be like Joseph; to be people of integrity –people who do what they say they are going to do; people who are honest; people who work hard; people who serve others; people who are wholly devoted to God; and people who order their lives according to God’s commandments and trust in him even –like Joseph– when the going gets tough.

We become people of integrity by practicing integrity in each moment and each interaction in daily life so that it becomes a habit. Joseph did not become a man of integrity overnight when his father died. Rather, he practiced it throughout his life, in each situation, so that when that incredibly difficult time did finally come (What could be more difficult and heart-wrenching than watching your father die?) he was ready and able to fulfill his father’s final wishes. It was a habit. May God help us to cultivate this great virtue of integrity for his glory and for the spread of his kingdom.

Father Gordon Anderson
Rector of Saint Alban’s Anglican Church
Joppa, MD

Lent 4 – Friday, March 15

Morning Prayer - First Lesson - 1 Corinthians 14:26ff

“God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”

(1 Corinthians 14:33)

Pride has often been called the chief of the deadly, or capital, sins. It is the unfitting desire for self over and above God and others. According to Hugh of Saint Victor, the result of pride “is a blindness of heart” stemming from the “foolish wisdom to wish to prefer oneself to others.” Pride obscures our perception of reality. In today’s readings, we are warned against pride and encouraged to take up a posture of humility.

Pride is a grievous sin because it upsets God’s order for anthropocentric disordering. On a vertical axis, pride disrupts the relationship between Creator and creature; horizontally, pride disrupts relationships between creatures. We see the resulting chaos from these disruptions in today’s First Lesson from Exodus: Pharaoh views himself as a god and dominates and exploits the Israelites. The refusal to obey God results not in freedom, but tyranny of the most inhumane kind. Each part of creation was designed to sing its own unique part in praise to God; the sin of pride introduces a cacophony into the world with very real and horrific consequences.

What can we do to loosen pride’s grip on us? To fight the sin of pride in ourselves, we must know ourselves based on what God says about us. In knowing ourselves, we understand not what we want to be, but who God created us to be. This combats pride because it prevents us from being blind of heart: we see everything more clearly because we understand how we fit into the larger whole of creation. At the same time, self-knowledge prevents us from lapsing into false humility, or pusillanimity, because we see that God has

created us for a great purpose. Our humility begins with a recognition of our absolute dependence on God both for our being and the grace of redemption and continues when we become aware of the fact that God has called us to the specific work of edifying his Body, the Church.

In this section of 1 Corinthians we have been reading the past few days, St. Paul deals with the topic of spiritual gifts. The problem in Corinth seemed to be the sin of pride puffing up members who possessed some gifts, usually the showy “sign gifts,” at the expense of those who possessed other gifts. As a corrective measure, in the latter part of chapter 14, St. Paul lays out two sets of rules—one for those speaking in tongues (vv. 27-28) and another for those who have the gift of prophecy (vv. 29-33). The final verse of the reading is, most likely, a “prophetic” principle but it can be extended to a meta-level: “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”

Lent is a season for us to do the hard work of purging vice and embracing virtue so that we might decrease the confusion in our lives while experiencing his peace. To the end of purging pride, we can consider Lent as a great opportunity for us to put others before ourselves through acts of almsgiving. It is also important that in our disciplines and habits this season, we come to know ourselves. What are your spiritual gifts? Are you using them for the edification of the Body? How can you support those in your parish who may have different giftings from yours? And finally, a third thing we should meditate on is liturgy, both Mass and the Daily Office. Our corporate liturgies teach us not only to be individual Christians (if such a thing exists), but help us understand our role in the Church, recognizing that we do not all occupy the same roles by God’s design.

Father Wesley Walker
Rector of Saint Paul’s Anglican Church
Crownsville, MD

Lent 4 – Saturday, March 16

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...” (1 Corinthians 15:1a)

One of the greatest pieces of advice I ever received was given to me during my graduation ceremony from middle school. Fr. Collins exhorted a bunch of happy, now graduated ex-eighth graders, “Do not graduate from the Gospel.”

St. Paul says essentially the same to the church at Corinth which had many problems—they were struggling with disorderly worship, abuse of the Lord’s Supper, lawsuits, sexual immorality, and divisions within the church. St. Paul addresses all of these problems by reminding the Corinthians of the Gospel—that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day. The Gospel is the answer to all of those problems and to all of that sin. Then Paul points out that God’s people stand in the Gospel and that the Gospel is the power of God for our salvation.

We need the particular Gospel of Jesus Christ: that Christ died on the cross for our sins, that he was buried and that he rose again on the third day, because this is God’s answer to sin—and not just to the sins of the Corinthians but to our sins as well. The Gospel is the answer to our sin of pride, to our sin of coveting, to our hatred and lack of love for others, to our laziness,

and to our lusts. The Gospel is the answer that we need. And yet, we are tempted to move on quickly from the Gospel. We are tempted to think “yes, I know THAT already.” But Paul is telling us that we never “move on” from the Gospel.

The Gospel is the story about Christ, God’s son, who died and was raised and is established as Lord. This is the Gospel in a nutshell. And we need to hear it, because it is God’s answer for sin. And we need to speak it because it is the answer we desperately need.

If you are suffering with anxiety, the Gospel of Jesus brings peace. If you are troubled by despair, the fact that Jesus Christ died for your sins and God the Father raised him from the dead, brings you hope. If you are specially suffering due to the brokenness of this world, the Gospel reminds you that God will create a new heaven and a new earth. If you are facing the death of a loved one, the Gospel gives you the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The Gospel is the answer we need.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do not graduate from the Gospel. We need the real Gospel. We need to hear it and we need to speak it. As St. Paul said, “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand...that Christ died for our sins...And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Amen.

Father James V. Johnson, Jr.

Priest-in-Charge of All Saints Anglican Church
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Lent 5 – Passion Sunday, March 17

Homily for Lent 5, commonly called Passion Sunday
Holy Communion Gospel Proper – John 8:46-59
by Gregory the Great
(*Homily 18 on the Gospels*, Anglican Breviary C267-8)

Deary beloved brethren, consider the gentleness of God. He came to take away sin, and He saith; “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” He, who in virtue of his Godhead was able to justify sinners, did not distain to show by an appeal to reason that He was not Himself a sinner. But verily the words which he addeth are exceeding awesome: He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye, therefore, hear of them not, because we are not of God. Wherefore, if he that is of God, heareth God’s words, and if one who is not of God, is not able to hear God’s words, let each one ask himself: “Do I, in the ear of my heart, hear God’s words, and understand whose words they are?” The Truth commandeth us to long for a fatherland in heaven, to bridle the lust of the flesh, to turn away from the glory of the world, to covet no man’s goods, and to bestow freely of our own.

Let each of you therefore think within himself if this voice of God sound out loud in the ear of his heart; for thereby will he know whether he be of God. Some there be, whom it pleases not to hear the commandments of God, even with their bodily ears.

And some there be, who receive the same with their bodily ears but whose heart is far from them. And some also there be, who hear the words of God with joy, so that they are moved thereby even to tears. But when their fit of weeping is past they turn again to iniquity. They who despise to do the words of God certainly cannot be said to hear them. Wherefore, dearly beloved brethren, call up your own life before your minds eye, and then ponder with trembling those awful words which the mouth of the Truth speak: “Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”

The Truth speaketh these words concerning the reprobate. But the reprobate make manifest the same thing concerning themselves, by their evil deeds. Thus immediately followeth: “Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, ‘Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?’” Hear now what the Lord saith to so great an insult. “I have not a devil.” But He did not say, “I am not a Samaritan.” For in a sense a Samaritan He was indeed, since the word Samaritan is by interpretation a Watcher, and the Lord is that Watcher, of whom the Psalmist saith, that except he keep the city, any other watchman waketh but in vain. He also is that Watchman unto whom crieth Isaiah, “Watchman, what of the night, Watchman, what of the night?” Wherefore the Lord did not say, “I am not a Samaritan” – but, “I have not a devil.” Two charges were brought against Him. One He denied. To the other His silence gave assent.

Lent 5 – Monday, March 18

Morning Prayer – First Lesson – Exodus 3:1-15

“And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

(Exodus 3:5)

We have now come to the last two weeks of Lent, which we call Passiontide. Our pilgrimage to the Cross takes a more serious turn – as if we have made it through the valley and now start the long uphill trek to Jerusalem and Golgatha. The road has not changed, nor our purpose, but each day the approaching death of Jesus Christ weighs heavier and the familiar readings and lessons take on deeper meanings. Just how a spotlight in the theater centers the action on one particular character, Passiontide highlights Holy Scripture with the emphasis of the suffering Christ.

The Psalm appointed for Morning Prayer today (119:1-16) encourages us to follow God’s law and pursue God above all things. However, in the context of Passiontide, Psalm 119 can be read as Jesus’ own words: his declaration of his own perfect life. In this light, the Psalm highlights Jesus’ perfect humanity. As the new Adam, he is undefiled in the way, whose whole heart is devoted to His Father. But in that submission, Jesus will suffer, just as the final part of verse 8 echoes: “O forsake me not utterly.” In his humanity, the second person of the Trinity will experience the abandonment of his Father on the Cross.

We are then confronted with perfect divinity in the first lesson (Exod. 3:1-15). Moses hears the voice of God from a burning bush commanding him to save the Hebrews from Egypt. It is astounding that God's self revelation to Moses comes from his mercy. We know from the name, I AM, that this is the eternal being, God Almighty, and that he reveals his sacred name because of his great mercy towards his enslaved people. As the Psalm focuses on the humanity of Jesus, the reading from Exodus helps us meditate upon the true divinity of our Lord and Savior.

In the second lesson (1 Cor. 15:12-19), St. Paul focuses on Jesus Christ, fully man and fully God, highlighting the humanity of the psalm and the divinity from the first lesson. If either nature is neglected, our life as Christians is worthless. We are fools if the Resurrection is not a reality, and we are also fools if his death or identity claims were lies. I AM has become man and suffered in his flesh so that we might live. I AM has come to die so that we might join his eternal life. This is the great mystery of our faith and also our true hope!

Our somber, Lenten pilgrimage is also our walk towards joy in God's mercy – a deep joy that reinvigorates our way of life. God calls us to respond, to live in his life and awake to righteousness. May this Passiontide give us new insights into Christ's identity and sacrifice so that we might live in God's mercy and truth.

Father Sean McDermott
Rector of All Saints Anglican Church
Charlottesville, VA

Lent 5 – Tuesday, March 19

Morning Prayer, First Lesson – Exodus 4:10-18, 27-31

“And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? ... have not I the LORD?” (Exodus 4:11)

We often think that only the most articulate, confident, and intelligent people can be used by God to accomplish his will. Those who possess the bravado, self-confidence, or swagger, are often seen as God’s anointed leaders. That might be the world’s barometer in evaluating what is right, but it is not the way of our Lord.

Exodus 4:10-16 recounts Moses’ objection to the Lord calling him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. In verse 10, Moses protests by saying: “O my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” The Lord responds in verse 11, “Who hath made man’s mouth?... have not I the Lord?” Just as the Lord was going to show that he is the Creator to the Egyptians by destroying their gods, so he needed to remind Moses that nothing is too hard for him. The One who is the great “I AM” is the One who gave Moses everything he needed to lead his people out of their slavery.

We might feel inadequate to do what God has set before us, but he will not leave us helpless. He will always provide an Aaron to come alongside us. He will always be present as we seek to be his humble and faithful servants. This is the whole point of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes Christ present to us in the sacraments. The Spirit leads and guides us throughout our lives helping us to keep our eyes fixated on Jesus. Our calling is to be humble and willing servants.

There was another man who came to lead his people out of their bondage and slavery. This man did not have the looks or the ambition of an earthly ruler. This man learned the trade of a carpenter. This man was not the hero of any political group or faction. As a matter of fact, he was rejected by most of his peers. As Isaiah 53:3 says, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Jesus is greater than Moses as He is the God who has come in human flesh. He is the One that came, not in the pomp and splendor of a king; he came in humility to offer his own life for the world. As Isaiah goes on to say, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (53:4).

As baptized Christians, we are called to follow in the way of our Savior. We are called to humble ourselves in service to God and to our neighbor, seeking to be faithful in all things. As St. Paul reminds us in I Corinthians 2:1-4, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Father Wade Miller
Rector of Saint Philip’s Anglican Church
Blacksburg, VA

Lent 5 – Wednesday, March 20

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - St. John 12:20-33

“Now my soul is troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” (St. John 12:27)

In the continuation of John’s Gospel this evening, it is as if Our Lord gives Himself pause in the middle of teaching His disciples. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies...He who loves his life will lose it...If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me...Now my soul is troubled. Knowing how the drama of Holy Week will unfold, Our Lord’s trouble here puts Gethsemane in mind. And what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour?” The grain of wheat is suddenly the totally human, totally suffering Body of Our Lord. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with me. The “anyone who serves Me, let him follow Me” is now the sleepy, half-hearted disciples. It is now me. I am who must follow Him to the Cross, through the grave and gate of death. In His humanity, He has chosen to know the soul-troubling prospect of death.

Jesus is the Lover of our souls because He has done what every lover has ever desired to do: to know, to feel, to participate in the suffering of the beloved. Our Jesus’ soul was troubled. God is troubled by His own death. How impossible love can be. That the King of Glory (whose prophecy in Psalm 24 is fulfilled just before this

passage at the Triumphal Entry) would go to the lowest parts of human pain so as to (we can imagine) make a deeply troubled face at the thought of His precious death and passion. We hear in His heart the whispers of Gethsemane: Let this cup pass from me.

But as with the Lord's temptations in the wilderness, we know that He did not indulge or give into temptation to despair or cower from His purpose, for which He came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. In response to the human voice leading to evading the Cross, the divine Voice affirms its necessity: I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. The glory of Life Himself is His death. For it will draw the lifeless to His everlasting Life. I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. We are those who have been drawn by the lifting up of the Cross. The venom of the serpent is drawn out by our drawing closer to this Tree, to the God Who was hung on it.

In all of Our Lord's displays of human weakness, we see more and more the strength of His selfless love. All the hunger, thirst, tears, and trouble He knew were redeeming and sanctifying every hunger pang, every dry throat, every sorrowful cry, and every troubled soul. May the remainder of this fast, this season of self-inflicted trouble, be to the deeper love of the God Who is troubled for us.

Father Kevin Fife

Vicar of Saint James on the Glebe Anglican Church
Gloucester, VA

Lent 5 – Thursday, March 21

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - 1 Corinthians 15:50ff

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me.” (Psalm 23:4)

Those words are so easily said and prayed...but when death is near it is not unusual to be anxious and to fear...it's so easy to fear a victory-less enemy.

Even Jesus when His death was near felt such great unease that He appeared to be in agony and fear.

At the time of death many of us fear pain, loss of loved ones, the unknown dying experience and existence after death.....even while we continue to pray for increased trust in Jesus. For some there may even be a wavering of trust in Jesus at this time.

But that is where the whole chapter 1 Corinthians 15 is so helpful. Paul is teaching and comforting his flock as they express confusion and uncertainty about life after death. During the time of Christ, outside the early church, many people did not believe in a life after death, let alone a bodily life after death. They thought the whole idea was laughable. Most believed that at death life just ended or perhaps led to a shadowy permanent but unsubstantial existence in some netherworld.

So what Paul was preaching and asking his flock to believe was really radical for his time. He was preaching not only a spiritual resurrection but also a bodily one. He starts the chapter by telling his flock about Christ's resurrection (v. 1ff) and reminds them that there were still people alive who had seen Jesus in His body after His death. Then Paul goes even further (v. 12ff) by telling them that just as Christ died and was

resurrected bodily, so will they because of their Baptism into Jesus' life and death. Jesus' resurrection foreshadows and promises theirs. Next Paul addresses their question, "What kind of body will we have?" (v. 35ff). He tells them it will be a new spiritual eternal body fit for the work God has planned for them. "It is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body" (v. 44) immortal, incorruptible and powerful enough to have victory over the god of this world (2 Cor.4:4), to judge angels (1 Cor.6:3), and co-rule the world with Christ (1 Cor.6:2).

Thus, Paul ends the chapter with the scripture selected for this devotional (v. 50ff). It is a teaching that was meant to strengthen his flock as they persevered and faced ridicule or worse. It was to build their confidence and trust at the time of death. Two thousand years later, these words still have the power to strengthen us as we walk through "the shadow of death" and sometimes ridicule.

"Now this I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God".... "we shall be changed"... we "will be raised imperishable" "this mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:50). Like the acorn that goes into the ground in one form to rise again in another form so will we as we move from our corruptible life and body to our incorruptible life and body, from our mortal body to our eternal body. We will be made fit for the eternal work God has planned for us. By this mystery "Death is swallowed up in victory." It's Christ's victory over death through His cross and resurrection and our participation in that victory with Him.

Next week we will watch and remember as Jesus goes through His earthly death and rises to victory on Easter morning. He is showing us the way. We can have confidence that through Him we also will rise again...new and perfected shouting "Where O Death is your Victory!"

Deaconess Tina Jenkins

Saint Michael the Archangel Anglican Church

Matthews, NC

Lent 5 – Friday, March 22

Evening Prayer - First Lesson - Jeremiah 32:36-42

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

(Jeremiah 32:40)

In a world where consent is increasingly replacing covenant, feelings for the Lord are superseding fear of the Lord, and hearts are considered the highest standard for authenticity, promises like this verse can fail to capture the imagination as they ought. Today, covenants are seen as archaic, fear is perceived as oppressive, and Disney has taught us that our hearts are fine just the way they are, so we should follow them. Where’s the Good News in promises like the ones recorded in Jeremiah?

Well, first things first: covenants are the only way God relates to His people. If you haven’t entered a covenant with God, you haven’t entered a relationship with God (at least not a saving one). Prior to Jeremiah’s promised new, everlasting covenant, God had established five others: with Adam and Eve 1st, with Noah 2nd, with Abraham 3rd, with Israel through Moses 4th, and with David 5th. This promised 6th covenant was needed because even though God’s people had grown in size with each subsequent covenant (from one couple¹, to a household², to a tribe³, to a nation⁴, and even to a kingdom⁵), they had also grown in sin – so much so that after the 5th covenant God’s people had to be sent into Exile (2 Kings 17:7-23). They were cut off from being God’s people, without a functioning Temple filled with God’s Presence and a functioning throne filled by a Davidic King.

This promised 6th and final covenant was going to fix all that had gone wrong, as well as expand God’s people from a

national kingdom to a universal church. It would be established with Jesus, the Christ, who would sacrificially offer Himself as a Passover lamb to lead all who would accept Him in a new exodus where they would universally serve Him as their new King and worship Him in His new Temple – bringing an end to the Exile and a start to the New Creation.

By offering his broken body and shed blood He would bring the forgiveness of sins that had exiled God's people; by dying in flesh He would turn away God's wrath, and by descending to and resurrecting from Sheol/Hades itself in the Spirit, He would liberate God's people (starting with the dead and continuing until the full number of the living would be complete) so that they could worship and serve Him as a part of His One, Holy, Catholic/Universal and Apostolic Church.

This New Covenant worship and service would then be made possible by the other promises revealed to Jeremiah. Under the old covenants, humanity's sensual feelings and sinful hearts had brought them under the curses of those covenants, but now by the work of the Messiah, humanity would be able to experience the blessings of being in a covenant with God. Devoted fear of the Lord would be placed into their hearts, where the fear of death had once enslaved them (Heb.2:14-15), and with that placement would come hearts desirous to do God's will. And this, quite frankly, is the chief benefit we seek throughout the Lenten Season: "new and contrite hearts" to obtain "perfect remission and forgiveness" and to thereby be made active members of the New Covenant people of God, in His New Temple, the Church, under His New King, Jesus. The fact that this is available to us, is Good News indeed.

Father Allen Fisher

Rector of Saint Michael the Archangel Anglican Church
Matthews, NC

Lent 5 – Saturday, March 23

Evening Prayer - Second Lesson - John 13:1-17

“If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.”

(John 13:8b)

Then, Jesus “...rose from [the Passover] supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.”

The custom of the day was that before supper, guests would have their feet washed by the lowest member of the household. If the household was wealthy enough to have servants, the lowest ranked servant was the foot washer. If the household did not have servants, the youngest child was the foot washer. But under no circumstances would the lord of the house ever be the foot washer. That task was beneath him.

And yet, the Lord of lords washed the disciples’ feet. The one by whom all things were made – including the dirt that was washed away, the feet that were washed, and the water used for the washing – got down on his knees and washed the disciples’ feet. And Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me” (John 13:4-8).

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you know

what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:12-17).

Matthew 20:28 tells us that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, and as Jesus' hands and feet on this earth Christians are called to do exactly that. And so, on this the eve of Holy Week, as we prepare our hearts minds and souls for all that is to come, contemplate Jesus' words "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" and ask yourself "Have I truly allowed Jesus to wash me? Have I allowed Jesus to wash away the dirt of the world that clings to me (and that I cling to) on my life's journey? I know that Jesus died for my sins, but have I allowed Jesus to truly cleanse me from all those sins, or am I holding on to the ones that are too difficult to let go of?"

Jesus already took every sin that has ever been committed, and every sin that ever will be committed, to the cross – he is the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. Allow your soul to be washed clean by His most precious blood. "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" (John 13:4-8).

Father Michael P. Sclafani
Vicar of All Souls Anglican Church
Asheboro, NC

Palm Sunday – March 24

Homily for Palm Sunday

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – Matthew 27:1-54

by Saint Leo the Great

(Sermon 2 On the Passion of our Lord

Anglican Breviary C279-80)

Dearly beloved, the solemnity of the Lord's Passion is come; that day which we have so desired, and which same is so precious to the whole world. Shouts of spiritual triumph are ringing, and suffer not that we should be silent. Even though it be hard to preach often on the same solemnity, and do so meetly and well, a priest is not free to shirk the duty of preaching to the faithful concerning this so great mystery of divine mercy. Nay, that his subject matter is unspeakable should in itself make him eloquent, since where enough can never be said, there must needs ever be somewhat to say. Let human weakness then, fall down before the glory of God, and acknowledge itself unequal to the duty of expounding the works of His mercy. Let us toil in thought, let us falter in speech; it is good for us to feel how inadequate is the little we are able to express concerning the majesty of God.

For when the Prophet saith: "Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore," let no man thence conclude that he will ever find all that he seeketh. For if he cease his seeking, he will likewise cease to draw

near. But among all the works of God which weary the stedfast gaze of man's wonder, what is there that doth at once so ravish and so exceed the power of our contemplation as the Passion of the Saviour? He it was who, to loose mankind from the bonds of the death-dealing Fall, spared to bring against the rage of the devil the power of the divine Majesty, and met Him with the weakness of our lowly nature. For if our cruel and haughty enemy could have known the counsel of God's mercy, it had been his task rather to have softened the hearts of the Jews into meekness, than to have inflamed them with unrighteous hatred. Thus he might not have lost the thralldom of all his slaves, by attacking the liberty of the One that owed him nothing.

But he was undone by his own malice. For he brought upon the Son of God that death which is become life to all the sons of man. He shed that innocent blood which was to become at once the price of our redemption and the cup of our salvation. Wherefore the Lord hath received that which according to the purpose of his own good pleasure He hath chosen, He submitted Himself to the ungodly hands of cruel men which, busy with their own sin nonetheless ministered to the Redeemer's work. And such was His loving-kindness, even for His murderers, that His prayer to His Father from the cross asked not vengeance for Himself, but forgiveness for them.

Holy Week – Monday Before Easter, March 25

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - St. John 14:1-14

“...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...”

(St. John 14:9b)

Genealogy has been a booming business over the past few decades. We can sign up with Ancestry or GenWeb in order to begin discovery about our predecessors. Henry Gates has a TV program where he brings in well-known people and reveals previously unknown, and often surprising elements of their past. And for as little as \$79 any of us can take a swab from inside our cheeks and get a full DNA report about our place of origin within the human race. It is obvious there is a fascination and desire to know about our history. And perhaps, the longing for this information is linked to a deeper quest which is to know who we really are and what our value is in a world that seems less and less personal.

The Gospel for today is well known. It is assigned in our Prayer Book as a reading at the culmination of this life for the Burial of the Dead. It sums up our significance not because of who we are, but rather ‘whose’ we are! In this text Jesus identifies who he really is. He is the living image of his Father. But he is not just a secondary reflection of God; he is God, and to see him is to see his Father. Charles Williams, the English writer, coined a phrase about the indwelling of Jesus and the Father which he called

‘coinherence.’ It is another way of speaking about the Incarnation—the enfleshment of the divine in the human. If Jesus is not fully God and fully man he is simply a teacher of morality who comes to a tragic end. This is not what he says. It is his claim to be the embodiment of the Father that allows him to make us whole.

There is one further step offered us in this Gospel. It is the ‘coinherence’ of Christ and us. We are not mere spectators in the drama of salvation and the fulfilment of history. We are taken into the mutual love of the Father and the Son by the gift of the Spirit indwelling in us. When we were baptized into Christ, we were baptized both into his death and his never-ending life. We are organically connected to him. When we peer into a mirror and see our physical image, we should recognize that the truest image is underneath the visual. The truest image is we are now imbued with God’s life. That is where our spiritual genealogy finds its beginning. This connection is ongoing and every time we join in Mass we again are made one with Christ so that we may dwell in Him and he in us.

Father Mark Menees
Rector of Saint John’s Anglican Church
Greensboro, NC

Holy Week – Tuesday Before Easter, March 26

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - John 15:1-16

“I am the vine ye are the branches, he that abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

In this portion of John’s Gospel, we read the familiar account of Jesus’s teaching using the metaphor of vine and branches. These words connected with most of the people who lived in this time and place where agriculture was a way of life. In today’s world, a similar example might be electrical current which has a source of energy from a generator and the electrical power it produces then travels through wiring to energize a light bulb or numerous other products in our modern age. In a similar way, had Jesus lived in a more contemporary age, he might have used the human anatomy to illustrate his intimate connection between himself and his disciples. Very little during Jesus’ time upon this earth was known of the human anatomy. One thing that they did know, however, was if someone were injured in battle by a spear or arrow and blood flowed out of the body that person would die. Those who are in Christ through Holy Baptism are infused with the life-giving blood of our Savior and eternal life that will not fade away.

From the earliest human history, man had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, which meant cultivating the ground to grow crops for himself and his family. So, the fruit of the vine was an important part of this cycle. From

the fruit of the vine comes food and wine and numerous other grape-based products.

The relationship between Jesus and his Disciples was based upon a relationship of love so deep that it was comparable to the vine and its branches. The branches receive their sustenance from the vine. Should that connection be broken between branch and vine, the branch will die. The husbandman of the vineyard also carefully prunes the branches that they may be more fruitful. Our Lord carefully through this metaphor shows his followers how they demonstrate their love for him by keeping his commandments, and the practical way is learning to love one another. This love must be so strong that it would mean potentially laying down one's life for another.

We are this week in the Holiest Days of our Christian Ordo Kalendar, when the drama of our redemption is drawing near. May we draw our strength for loving and serving our Lord Jesus Christ from these critical words about the vine and the branches. Those who call themselves Christians must take seriously the words of this Gospel that, if we are to be the fruitful branches which he would have us be, we must put away all malice, selfishness and pride. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might full." Have a blessed Holy Week and Resurrection Day.

The Most Reverend Walter H. Grundorf
Emeritus Presiding Bishop of the Anglican Province of
America and the Diocese of the Eastern United States

Holy Week – Wednesday Before Easter, March 27

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - John 16:1-15

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” (John 16:1-2)

Here in John 16 Christ is preparing his disciples to live in a hostile environment after his death, burial, and resurrection, and his ascension to the right hand of the Father. And what does he now say to them?

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:1-2).

Jesus predicted that his disciples would be “put out of the synagogues.” This reveals that Christ had in mind the unbelieving Jews when he thought of the persecutors. They would drive Christians from the established places of worship and push them to the fringes of society. It was the unbelieving Jews who crucified Christ, and much of the persecution that came upon the early church did, in fact, come from them. Indeed, many who persecuted Christians, even to the point of death, thought that they were doing so “in the service of God.” Think of Saul’s behavior before he was converted and became our brother, Paul.

Christ knows all of this. And how does he prepare his disciples for the trouble ahead? He teaches them. He instructs them. He gives them truth so that they might remember these things. To remember is to recall

information. He gives them information so that they might remember it and live by it.

Notice here that when Christ thinks of the disciples whom he loves – as he looks into their deeply troubled eyes – he sees that the greatest threat to them is not suffering, nor is it death, but it is apostasy. In Jesus’ assessment of things, the worst thing that could happen to one of his followers is that they fall away. The preservation of our faith is a process. The question is not will God preserve his people, but how will he do it? The answer is that he will do it by means of word and Spirit. Preservation is a process. Preservation comes to us through means. God uses means to preserve those who belong to him. His words instruct us; his word encourages us; his word warns us. His Spirit, enlightens, encourages, and empowers. For the one who is truly in Christ, these means are effective. The true Christian hears the warnings about apostasy and heeds them. The true Christian has the Spirit, who is our helper – the Paraclete. The true Christian perseveres. This is brought about by the power of the word and through the work of the Spirit. The false believer – the temporary believer – does not have the Spirit, nor does he pay attention to the warnings contained within God’s word. He is a disciple on the outside only, and not inwardly and from the heart.

Words are without effect if they are not accompanied by the transforming power of the Spirit. Pray for God’s help. Pray that the Spirit would indeed be your helper until the end.

The Right Reverend Robert Todd Giffin
Bishop Ordinary, Diocese of the Central and Western
States and Rector of Saint Chad’s Anglican Church
San Antonio, Texas

Holy Week – Maundy Thursday, March 28

Epistle for Holy Communion - 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread.” (1 Corinthians 11:23)

“**T**he Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed” – these words are echoed in the Prayer of Consecration that we hear at each celebration of the Holy Eucharist; “For in the night in which he was betrayed...” On the night when He was betrayed – this very night – Christ took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it and gave it to His disciples, to His friends, as being His body, and likewise with the cup, as being His blood.

Yet the company of friends is equally the company of betrayers. That is the hard truth which we have ever to contemplate about His most trusted companions and to contemplate about ourselves. We are the betrayers of Christ in precisely the same way, in the context of the fellowship of friends.

This revelation about ourselves is the reason why, for Anglicans especially, there can be no celebration of the Holy Eucharist without the explicit confession of sin. This is our way of acknowledging this reality about ourselves, indeed this reality of our foolish and fallen humanity. Moreover, confession is not merely a formal, preliminary matter to be disposed of and gotten over before moving on to the celebratory part of the service, the type of mentality which infects contemporary liturgy with such a spirit of carelessness and casualness. In the traditional liturgy, the confession is built right into the celebration. It is an integral element of the celebration.

We cannot simply enter into the eucharistic celebration at any time without the recollection of our betrayals as the cause

of Christ's death. Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the "Triduum Sacrum," the Sacred Three Days, three great Holy Days of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. We call this Thursday "Maundy." The word is probably derived from the Latin word "Mandatum," which means "commandment." This is a reference to Jesus' instruction to the disciples while they ate together on the night that He was betrayed. Jesus says in St. John 15:12-14, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" – and this is indeed the day that celebrates Christ's new commandment. All the traditional ceremonies of this day – the washing of the feet, the blessing of oils for the sick, for baptism and confirmation, and for ordination and consecration by the Bishop (known as the Chrism Mass), and the institution of the Holy Eucharist – all reinforce that idea.

It is remarkable that Jesus, knowing all hearts, instituted His Supper just before His betrayal by Judas and his abandonment by the other disciples. But love compelled Him, and in obedience to His Father's will He would go to the Cross for us after its institution.

Tonight is the night of His betrayal, and the altar following the Eucharistic celebration will be stripped and stand cold and bare; but we have the sign of reconciliation to be our sustenance. And we shall treasure that sign, not as proof of worldly gain, but as a pledge of a new heavenly life. This is therefore a moment of festivity, despite our shortcomings, when faith gives thanks for food and drink which do not perish, but which endure to everlasting life. Therefore, we give thanks, and in celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ, we learn, "For as often as [we] eat this bread and drink this cup, [we] do shew the Lord's death till he come."

The Right Reverend David Haines
Bishop of Global Partnerships and Rector of All Saints
Anglican Church
Wilmington, NC

Holy Week – Good Friday, March 29

Morning Prayer - Second Lesson - St. John 18

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he...” St. John 18:4-5a

The gospel reading for the third Sunday of Epiphany relates to the reader the events of the marriage feast in Cana which includes our Lord’s first miracle. His response to His mother, “woman what have I to do with thee” concerning the lack of wine always bothered me until I realized one day why our Lord’s response was so.

It seems that Mary ignored his response knowing that He would take care of the situation and so told the servants to do what he would tell them to do. Jesus, having compassion on those at the wedding, then changed the water into wine taking care of the problem and insured that those attending the feast would continue to enjoy the event.

Jesus knew that performing that first miracle would put Him on a road, with no turning back, that would lead to the night mentioned in the scripture above and

the day that would follow it. He knew the divine plan for the atonement and redemption of mankind. He knew the love of God for His creation but He also knew the deed would have to be done in a very real human body that would feel all the pain of that sacrifice of Himself. So, the words “they have no wine” had brought him to the night in question.

Jesus knew He had to go with these men so God’s plan for mankind’s atonement and redemption could be accomplished. He had asked if there was another way to do it when He was praying but knew there wasn’t. He could have called on the angels of heaven to stop them from taking Him. Instead when He saw those who had come for Him, He did not call upon the angels, try to hide or run away. He “said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he..”

The Right Reverend William Perkins, Jr.
Suffragan Bishop of the APA Diocese of the Eastern
United States and Rector of Saint Mary the Virgin
Anglican Church
Delray Beach, FL

Holy Week – Holy Saturday, March 30

HIS MIGHTY RESURRECTION

Alleluia!
Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed!
Alleluia!

*“When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.”*
(*Te Deum laudamus*, Morning Prayer)

The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the grave is the foundation and crowning event of the orthodox Christian Faith, the basis of all that we believe and profess. ‘Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures... if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain... but now is

Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept' (I Corinthians 15.1-4, 14, 20).

For this reason, Easter Day is the original and unique Christian festival, the celebration from which the rest of the Christian liturgical year springs. Easter is so important and vital that it is not merely one Day, but a Day that expands into eight, and then forty. The initial eight days of the Easter commemoration, the great Octave, becomes the source for all other Octaves in the Church Year. The eight days signify the New Creation: God created the world in six days, rested on the seventh, and recreated the world by Christ's Resurrection on the eighth, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, the new day of Christ's victory over death.

Ancient Christian art and architecture reinforce this truth – early baptisteries of the patristic period feature octagonal, eight-sided, buildings and baptismal pools, showing in sign and form that through the regenerative and saving waters of Baptism we are plunged into the death and Resurrection of Christ and made partakers of the New Life, the New Creation inaugurated by the Lord Jesus in His bodily Resurrection (Romans 6.1-11, Hebrews 9.13-15, I Saint Peter 3.21-22, Titus 3.5). The day of our Holy Baptism was our own Easter Day, the day of our new birth in Christ and the pledge of our own Resurrection from the dead. The Church is first and foremost the community of the Resurrection, the band of faithful disciples of Jesus which worships and

serves the Risen Lord of Glory, the Mystical Body of Christ indestructibly identified with and supernaturally and sacramentally united to her deathless Head (I Corinthians 12.12-14, Galatians 3.27).

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest and most profound truth of all, the supreme and central Mystery of our faith with which the Apostles began their preaching of the Gospel after the bestowal of the Holy Ghost on Whitsunday. Our Redemption was won by Christ's death on the Cross of Calvary; by His mighty Resurrection, eternal life is given to us. The Resurrection is the ground of the Church's continual triumph, the cause of her endless rejoicing, the source and summit of her faith and life. Until the advent of God the Word in human flesh in the Incarnation and His conquest over death, the entire human race suffered in a state of rejection and alienation from God, far from God because of sin, enslaved in spiritual death. This misery continued until the Resurrection of Christ, which was our deliverance and salvation.

Through His death on the Cross, His descent into hell and His magnificent Resurrection, Our Lord has raised His people to the hope of heaven – 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things' (Ephesians 4.8-10).

The Lord Jesus, descending to the dead, took hell captive, He destroyed it, He put death to death; He overthrew and bound our last enemy (I Corinthians 15.26). Our Divine Lord annihilated the power of death over us. Now in Christ, our physical death becomes but a blessed transition from this fallen world to the age of the world to come, to the larger life in which we shall be received more and more into His joyful service and in which we, and His servants everywhere, shall win the eternal victory.

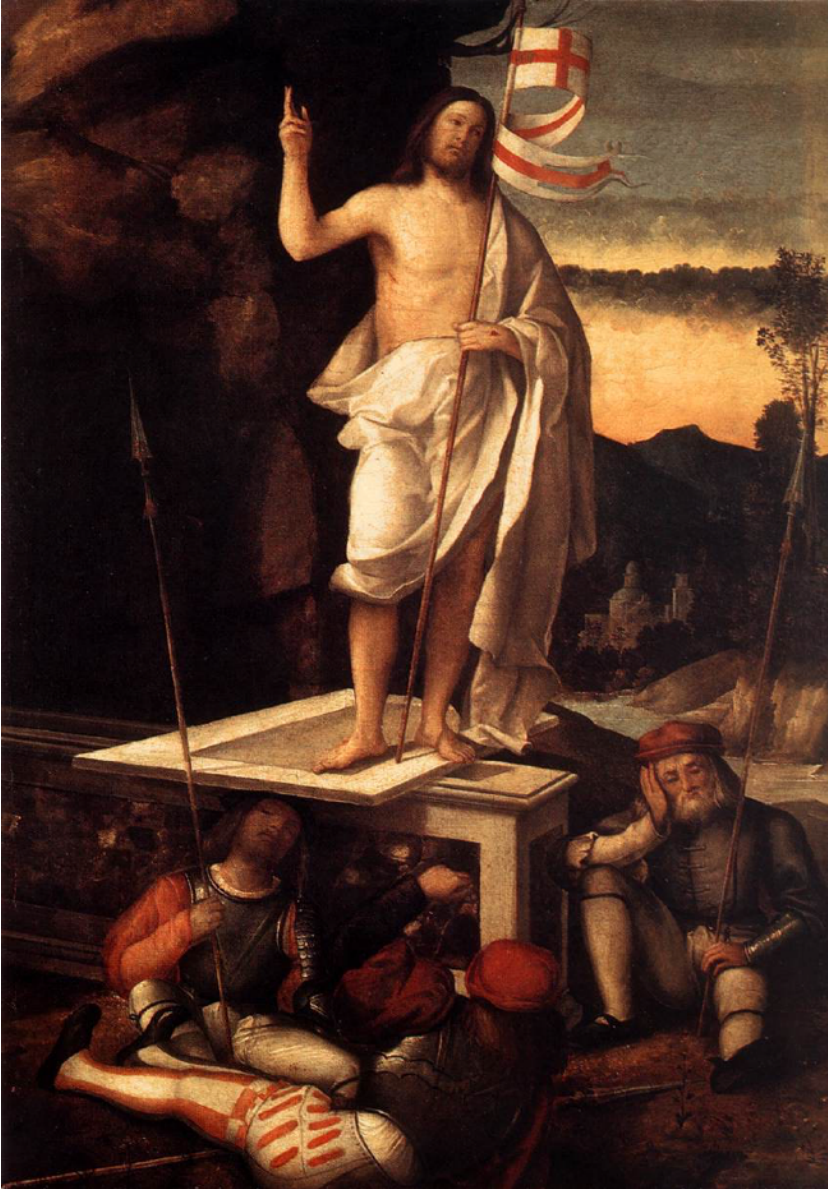
Because of the Resurrection of Christ, we shall eternally grow and develop into the life of God in the land of light and joy in the fellowship of the Saints, as we go from strength to strength, and with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the image of Jesus from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 3.18). Now in Christ, bodily death is for us only a temporary breach, for by His mighty Resurrection, Christ has opened to us the gates of everlasting life, the general Resurrection of the body. Now we know we shall die in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life through Jesus, at whose coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed, and made like unto his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself (Philippians 3.21).

‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’ (I Saint John 3.2). The Resurrection of Christ is the assurance of our own resurrection.

To depart this life is to be with Christ, for we know we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, many mansions in our Father’s house, a place prepared for us, in which Our Lord will receive us unto Himself, that where He is, we may be also. The joy and blessedness of the heavenly Church, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, the Church of the first-born written in heaven, with Apostles, Prophets, Confessors, Virgins and Martyrs, await us in their perfect fullness and fulfillment. In communion with all saints and angels and each other, free from sorrow, suffering, pain and labours, and seeing God face and face as we worship and reign forever before the Throne of the Lamb, we shall literally live to witness the consequences of Easter!

God bless you!

The Most Reverend Chandler Holder Jones
Presiding Bishop, Anglican Province of America
Bishop Ordinary, APA Diocese of the Eastern United
States



The Resurrection of Christ by Marco Basaiti

Easter Day – Sunday, April 9

Homily For Easter Day

Holy Communion Gospel Proper – John 20:1-10

by Saint Gregory the Great

*(Homily 22 on the Gospels, The Anglican Breviary
C326-7)*

Brethren, the lesson which ye have just heard from the holy Gospel, is clear enough if it be considered in its historical sense only. However, not only does it contain history, but also suggestions of a mystic import, into which it is meet that we should at least make a brief inquiry. The evangelist saith that Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre early, when it was yet dark. By these words, according to the historical interpretation, is known the time of her visit. But according to a mystical interpretation, there is also set forth the state of mind of her who just came, and sought the sepulchre, namely, in these words, “It was yet dark.” For Mary was seeking after the very Author of life. But she was seeking Him as though He were lifeless, even as she had seen Him, in bodily fashion. And because she could not on this wise find Him, she thought that His body had been stolen. Therefore, truly, she was as yet in darkness.

And she ran quickly, and told Peter and John; of whom we read that they also ran. Verily, those who are most exercised by love, do go more quickly, and

further, than other folk. So Peter and John ran, both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. But note that he paused there, and waited, and did not at once enter in. Peter, however, when he came, went at once, and that boldly, into the sepulchre. Brethren, of what does this haste put us in mind? Is there no subtlety here, no mystic meaning? Doubtless the evangelist would not have said of himself, "Yet went he not in," if in that reverent shrinking of his there had been no mystery. For John, like the synagogue of the Jews, waited upon knowledge; whereas Peter, like the church of the Gentiles, came at once, although blindly, to the mystery of the empty sepulchre.

We have also heard how, according to the evangelist Mark, Mary Magdalene, and the other holy women who had followed the Lord, came to the sepulchre, bringing sweet spices. For him whom they had loved in life, they also served in death, and that with all care and tenderness. But in this there is indicated something which is to be done by all of us who are members of holy Church. If we, who believe in Him that was dead and is alive again, do come, seeking the Lord, and bearing with us the perfume of good works, and the sweet odor of holiness, then do we come as it were to his empty sepulchre bearing spices which are sweet indeed.

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