



Bringing Home the Word

First Sunday of Lent (A)

March 1, 2020

Sin and Redemption

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

One thing today's readings—and really all of Scripture—make abundantly clear is that the devil exists. He is a liar and a deceiver, just as he was for our first parents and for Jesus as well. This is good to keep in mind at the beginning of Lent. We need a conversion of heart because the devil tempts us. We are sinners. Sin is real. The story of original sin illuminates the failure of Adam and Eve, and the reading from Romans explains that that sin has reached us. In the Sistine Chapel fresco, *Original Sin and Banishment from the Garden of Eden*, Michelangelo paints the devil as a serpent with a human upper

body to accent that the devil is a person. All humanity is wounded and weakened by sin.

Yet even if sin and the devil are realities, the good news is that they are not the strongest realities. Jesus, as he shows us in the Gospel, is stronger than the enemy, and he shares that strength with us. We can be new creations through the salvation and forgiveness Jesus offers. His obedience can make us righteous.

During Lent, we try to purify our heart with God's grace so we freely choose righteousness. Our actions reveal another reality of the good news: our choices make a difference. God trusts us so much that he gives us free will and allows us to play a part in our own salvation. Accepting his grace is the first step toward victory over sin. That is why your Lenten fasts and promises are such game changers—they strengthen your will, purify your heart, and make you more like Jesus. +

Sunday Readings

Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7

The snake said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened."

Romans 5:12–19 or 5:12, 17–19

Through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all.

Matthew 4:1–11

Jesus answered [the devil], "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

*The devil exists.
He is a liar and a deceiver,
just as he was
for our first parents
and for Jesus.*

A Word from Pope Francis

There are three temptations of Christ....First, wealth: seizing hold of goods destined for all and using them only for "my own people." That is, taking "bread" based on the toil of others or even at the expense of their very lives. That wealth tastes of pain, bitterness, and suffering.

—Homily in Mexico, February 14, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Have I prayed about what God wants me to give up or take on in Lent?
- What resolutions will help me love God more?

Lent: Have You Given Up on Giving Up Stuff?

By Susan Vogt

A year ago, I was facing Lent—again. I was ready to repeat my annual routine: no sweets or complaining, extra prayer, and the usual fasting and abstinence. I realized, though, that I wasn't growing or being challenged. I decided to find a practice that would remind me daily of this penitential season and join me to Jesus' sacrifice of giving his life for others.

What if I gave away one thing a day for the forty days of Lent? I wanted to live a simpler lifestyle both for spiritual reasons and to declutter my life. I decided to take this on as a challenge—hoping it would clean out not only my closets but also my soul.

The Plan

I started my Lenten giveaway with shoes. I'm not a big shoe collector—or so I thought. According to Soles4Souls (soles4souls.org), the average American owns fourteen pairs of shoes. I figured I was under that and could go lower. Wrong. When I added up my shoes, it came to thirty pairs. I was horrified! I pruned it down to fourteen.

I moved to clothes. I had many clothes that I seldom wear. I discovered that I had enough extras to give more than one thing away a day and could go by categories.



I started with the letter “S”—shirts, skirts, suits, slacks, sweaters, and scarves—and gathered up all the old-fashioned or makes-me-look-fat garments. I pulled out about seven items for each “S,” creating breathing room in my closet. I felt pretty good about this pruning but ran into a problem.

What Do I Do with the Stuff?

At first I just collected my intended giveaways in a corner. But then my stuff started overflowing and getting in the way. In addition to giving things to charities, neighbors, and friends, I discovered Freecycle (freecycle.org) and Vietnam Veterans of America (pickupsforvets.org) who pick up at your home. My most satisfying experience was trying to get rid of an adult potty seat, the one item not claimed in my “Free Yard Sale.” A woman going to visit an elderly neighbor saw the seat and said, “The lady I'm visiting could use that!” She picked it up and went on her happy way.

What's this Got to Do with Lent and Spirituality?

I harkened back to my early religious education, remembering that Sunday isn't an official day of Lent. It's a day of rest and rejoicing, not penance. I decided not to give away anything on Sundays,

but rather to use the time to ponder how this experience was changing me: *Was I becoming less attached? Was it a holy sacrifice or simply a way to clean my house?*

Just as Jesus was stripped of his clothes before his crucifixion, I found myself stripping away excess clothes and household items to focus on what's most important in life: being generous and caring for those in need.

How has It Changed Me?

Although I haven't achieved total humility, I did stretch myself to think daily about the abundance I have instead of what I lack. I'm more aware of how to share what I have with others—even if it pinches. I remind myself that my importance isn't dependent on what I own. I feel more solidarity with those who are economically poor.

I now shop differently. When tempted to buy something because it's such a bargain, I consider: Do I really need this? Is it something I will eventually give away? Is there someone I can buy it for who needs it more than me?

Remember, eventually we'll all return to dust. The stuff of our lives just collects dust and makes it harder to prepare for that final journey. +

PRAYER

Lord, deepen my awareness of and respect for your presence in creation and in the people around me.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 2–7

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Lv 19:1–2, 11–18 / Mt 25:31–46

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 55:10–11 / Mt 6:7–15

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Jon 3:1–10 / Lk 11:29–32

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Est C:12, 14–16, 23–25 / Mt 7:7–12

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 18:21–28 / Mt 5:20–26

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Dt 26:16–19 / Mt 5:43–48



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Lent (A)

March 8, 2020

The Glory We Are Called To

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Raphael's greatest painting, *The Transfiguration*, depicts today's Gospel account. Raphael loved this painting so much he never sold it. He hung the painting over his bed, and at his death he turned to look at it.

The transfiguration of the Lord reminds us of the glory we are all called to even when that glory is hidden. When God called Abraham, it was to make of him a great nation and to give him glory. But Abraham had to leave what he had and enter into the unknown to receive

what was promised. We, too, need to set out and leave our expectations if we ever hope to enter the mysteries of faith and discover the reward we are searching for. Setting out and leaving behind are like little "deaths" that prepare us for the glory of salvation.

The Father revealed Jesus' glory to his three closest apostles so their faith would survive the cross. God didn't want them to become disillusioned or frightened by his suffering and death. A voice came down from heaven and confirmed Jesus as the Son to assure the apostles that even if he didn't seem like the Messiah in his human nature, he most certainly was.

It was this image of the glorified Jesus that Raphael reflected on and labored over for years. He needed to see this transfiguration during his life and at the hour of his death to keep the faith. So do we. +

A Word from Pope Francis

The event of the Lord's transfiguration offers us a message of hope—thus shall we be, with him. It invites us to encounter Jesus, to be at the service of our brothers and sisters.

—Angelus, August 6, 2017



Sunday Readings

Genesis 12:1–4a

The LORD said to Abram...I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you.

2 Timothy 1:8b–10

He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us.

Matthew 17:1–9

And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.

We need to set out and leave our expectations if we ever hope to enter the mysteries of faith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What images and objects around my house or workplace remind me of my faith?
- How can I be a sign of the glory to which we are called?

The Church: Catholic All Along

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

When I think *Catholic*, I think big. The Catholic Church is a big Church: big numbers (more than one billion members) spread all over the globe and big buildings—cathedrals and basilicas—with big parking lots.

But before we get carried away with too much of this external bigness, it might be good to remember that the Church was Catholic already at the first Pentecost, before there were any big cathedrals, parking lots, or a billion members. The Church was Catholic even when the disciples could all gather in one house.

Catholic implies big or universal—not just on the outside but big on the inside. Catholic is a mark of the inner nature of the Church. The Church is Catholic because it is all-embracing. The Catholic Church is the sacrament, the outward sign of a God who is Catholic, a God who is all-embracing and wants to share the one eternal banquet with people of every race, language, and way of life.

The Church is Catholic because, like God, it is not limited to one country or culture. In ancient times it was able to move from its Aramaic/Palestinian origins and adopt the language and culture of Greece to preach God's message. It then expressed itself in Syriac and spread to India and beyond. It



expressed itself in Coptic and spread to Egypt and throughout Africa. It adopted Roman customs and Latin language into its rituals. It employed Greek philosophy to explain its beliefs. It used the Roman legal system to organize its hierarchical structure. The Church is Catholic because it can take whatever is good in

disparate cultures and embrace it as its own.

A World of Disciples

The Catholic Church is not limited to one interpretation of what it means to be a disciple. When people, moved by the Holy Spirit, decide to live the gospel in a unique way, they don't have to start a new Church. The Catholic Church has room for a Benedict of Nursia, a Francis of Assisi, an Angela Merici, to name a few. There are many ways to live the gospel within the Church. That's what makes it Catholic.

Just think of the diverse groups that may exist within your own parish: Daughters of Isabella, Knights of Columbus, Opus Dei, St. Vincent de Paul Society, for example. It's a big Church. It's a *Catholic* Church.

But what happens when our Catholic Church embraces people we don't like or don't agree with. (For example, most Catholics would have difficulties with

at least one of the organizations listed above.) When this big, all-embracing Catholic Church welcomes people who don't think like I do, and when I have to worship with people different from me, I sometimes wonder if it would be better to belong to a little church where everyone is more alike.

Growing, Becoming

Being Catholic isn't always comfortable. It stretches me to think new, bigger thoughts. Our Church is not the place for narrow minds or one-issue religion. And this has been a problem from day one.

Jesus himself was too Catholic for some of his contemporaries. He dined with the wrong people, cured the wrong people, and made friends with the wrong people. His Catholicity was a scandal because his embrace was so inclusive that he shed his blood for all.

Being Catholic is not only a mark of pride, it is a challenge. Catholic is not only something that the church is. It is something the Church continually strives to *become*. +



Lord, open my ears to hear your invitation to listen to your Son in the Word of God and my heart to discern what it means to be your humble servant.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 9–14

Monday, Lenten Weekday:

Dn 9:4b–10 / Lk 6:36–38

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:

Is 1:10, 16–20 / Mt 23:1–12

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:

Jer 18:18–20 / Mt 20:17–28

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:

Jer 17:5–10 / Lk 16:19–31

Friday, Lenten Weekday: Gn 37:3–4,

12–13a, 17b–28a / Mt 21:33–43, 45–46

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:

Mi 7:14–15, 18–20 / Lk 15:1–3, 11–32

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

March 8, 2020

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Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Lent (A)
March 15, 2020

Evil Exchanged for Good

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

There is a detail in today’s first reading that you shouldn’t miss. After hearing Moses and his people complain, God stands in front of Moses on the rock and asks Moses to strike toward him. God knows the Israelites’ anger directed at Moses is really meant for God himself. God takes the blow and responds with flowing water. He accepts violent rejection and grants us life in return. He exchanges evil for good.

God had already guaranteed the Promised Land, but the Israelites feared to enter it. God had done many

miracles for them already, yet they still didn’t trust him. In spite of it all, God understands they strike out of their own dissatisfaction, fear, and interior slavery. In the same way, Jesus knows we will strike out at him, yet he responds with love. Nowhere is this truer than on the cross. Christ allows the soldiers to strike, crown, and kill him, saying, “Father, forgive them...” He is whipped and made to carry a cross, yet he consoles the women of Jerusalem. When his side is pierced, living water flows.

When we complain against God, he offers us mercy and salvation. Rather than blame, assault, or reject, let us do as the penitential act calls—strike our own breast and cry, “I have greatly sinned... Have mercy...” God will respond as he always does, by pouring forth the water of his Spirit which never runs dry into our hearts. +

Sunday Readings

Exodus 17:3–7

[The LORD said,] “Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink.”

Romans 5:1–2, 5–8

The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit.

John 4:5–42 or John 4:5–15, 19b–26, 39a, 40–42

[Jesus said,] “The water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Jesus knows we will strike out at him, yet he responds with love.

A Word from Pope Francis

This season of Lent is a good occasion to draw near to [Jesus], to encounter him in prayer in a heart-to-heart dialogue; to speak with him, to listen to him....In this way we can renew in ourselves the grace of baptism, quench our thirst at the wellspring of the Word of God.

—Angelus, March 19, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What are my usual complaints against God?
- What responses of mercy does God show me?

Social Sin, Social Responsibility

By Jim and Susan Vogt

When our children were young, we frequently heard, “It wasn’t me. I didn’t do it!” As adults, insisting on our innocence is still second nature: “If I didn’t start the fight, pollute the river, or own a slave, why should I take responsibility?”

The answer is at the foot of the cross. Who killed Jesus? Not you or me. Pontius Pilate gave the command. Soldiers nailed him to the cross. And religious leaders incited the crowd. But we can’t lay blame on one individual or group. Rather, we all participate in the evil of the crucifixion because we, too, sin.

Sin infects our attitudes, institutions, corporations, and politics. It’s called social sin, and it’s something for which we all are responsible. Social sin is evident when we see poverty. Human nature often leads the privileged to assume that less privileged people are where they are because of laziness, a poor work ethic, or lack of ability. We saw this error of thinking in our kids and their questions.

When our children were young, we used to ride bicycles through different neighborhoods. As we rode, our children would ask questions like: “Why don’t these families fix up their homes?” or “Why can’t they get a good job?”



Our family didn’t cause our neighbors’ poverty. But as Christ’s followers, we must take responsibility to do something about it. Christ’s parable of the last judgment doesn’t leave wiggle room when the Lord says, “Depart from me...for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave

me nothing to drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you did not give me clothing...What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me” (Matthew 25:41–45).

So, does this mean all will be right if we donate our old clothes to Goodwill, help build a Habitat for Humanity house, work at a soup kitchen, and visit the sick—or all of the above? Yes and no. These actions are necessary but not sufficient.

No matter how many mouths we feed at the soup kitchen, we must ask ourselves why, when we’re capable of eliminating hunger, do we lack the political will to do so? Why, in this rich country, is there still poverty? The answer often lies in our isolation from the needy. Direct service increases our awareness of needs around us, but then we must take the next step to change the system that allows these needs to continue. Following are ways in which Catholics can make a difference:

- **Purify your soul by prayer and fasting.** The prayer must be genuine, not self-righteous. Fasting puts us in solidarity with those who don’t have the luxury to voluntarily forego food or drink.
- **Don’t engage in anonymous sinfulness.** Racism isn’t always a result of deliberate maliciousness, but rather a result of allowing an unjust system to continue. By sitting on the sidelines and doing nothing, we are complicit in the neglect of our neighbor.
- **Get to know someone who is poor, a minority, or oppressed.** It’s difficult to move beyond superficial contact to immerse yourself in someone’s story and struggles, but it will sensitize your conscience and give you perspective.
- **Use this heightened awareness to propel you into social justice.** You don’t have to tackle everything. Commit to taking a first step, getting involved in one cause that contributes to systemic change for the common good.

Once you know the right thing to do, it is wrong to ignore your responsibility. “It wasn’t me” will be your condemnation. +

PRAYER

Lord, you created me to be a member of the human family. Empower me to show respect and love to all people regardless of their racial, cultural, religious, and social background.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 16–21

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
2 Kgs 5:1–15b / Lk 4:24–30

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 3:25, 34–43 / Mt 18:21–35

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dt 4:1, 5–9 / Mt 5:17–19

Thursday, St. Joseph: 2 Sm 7:4–5a,
12–14a, 16 / Rom 4:13, 16–18, 22 /
Mt 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Lk 2:41–51a

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Hos 14:2–10 / Mk 12:28–34

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Hos 6:1–6 / Lk 18:9–14

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Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Lent (A)
March 22, 2020

To Live By Faith

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Our Lenten practices are transforming our hearts to receive the love of Jesus in his passion, death, and resurrection. Today’s Gospel revolves around this theme of learning to live by faith. The apostles take for granted that the man’s blindness is due to someone’s sin. The Pharisees call the man a sinner, born in sin. In their self-righteousness they judge both the blind man and Jesus.

Jesus sees and judges differently. He asserts that the man’s blindness was not due to a sin of his own or that of his parents and restores his sight.

Sunday Readings

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a

God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart.

Ephesians 5:8–14

Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them.

**John 9:1–41 or
John 9:1, 6–9, 13–17, 34–38**

Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”

He challenges the wise, educated, and insightful Pharisees by saying, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains” (John 9:41).

While they can see physically, they cannot see the simple truth that Jesus is the Son of God and has the authority to heal, even on the Sabbath. They are so blinded by their “fidelity to God”—which is really fidelity to their distorted interpretation of the traditions and regulations God gave them—that they cannot see his spirit of mercy. They fail to see with eyes of faith.

Being merciful like Jesus doesn’t mean merely condemning blind legalism, it means showing God’s love to those in need. First we need to see as God sees. Then we need to love others and to enlighten them with the truth. Jesus heals one man’s blindness in the hope of opening the minds and hearts of the Pharisees—and us today. +

*While the Pharisees
can see physically,
they cannot see
the simple truth
that Jesus is
the Son of God.*

A Word from Pope Francis

We can imagine what Joseph must have been thinking. How is it that the Son of God has no home? ...And those of us who do have a home, a roof over our heads, would also do well to ask: Why do these, our brothers and sisters, have no place to live?

—Meeting with the homeless,
September 24, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Are there people or groups I blindly judge? What is at the root of these judgments?
- To what truths am I blind? How can I work to open my heart to these truths this Lent?

Ways the Gospels Make Us Uncomfortable

By Kathy Coffey

It may be a shift to read the Gospels and feel discomfort. While the words and actions of Jesus enlighten, they're no escape hatch. Conflict, tension, and frustration still plague believers.

But we read the Gospels for one purpose: to know Jesus better—not for warm fuzzies, easy answers, or reinforcement of prejudices. Nor will we always encounter “Jesus, meek and mild.”

He who threatened the cozy assumptions of his contemporaries may have the same effect on us. If we rely on the wrong supports, like wealth (Luke 6:20, 24), prestige (Matthew 23:1–12), or religious rituals (Mark 2:27–28), he'll challenge us, too.

Jesus questioned many of the customs of his time—such as the subservient role of women and the authority of the Pharisees. “It is hard to believe [Jesus] was simply an early flower child who traipsed through the sunlit fields talking about lilies and love!” Nathan Mitchell writes in *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*. “Who would seek to arrest and execute such a sap?”

The Perils of Storytelling

We may be uncomfortable with the Gospels' storytelling if we want just the



facts. We might prefer a precise blueprint or spreadsheet to rambling, inconsistent stories. But if we compare the Bible to our own complex, difficult life stories, we grow more comfortable with its mixed genres. We find links where the larger story of God intersects with our personal lives.

So we reflect not only on Jesus' and the Hebrews' experience in the desert, but also on our own desert times. Wandering in the wilderness brings valuable insights we don't learn in secure kitchens.

As much as we enjoy the intriguing connections, storytelling has its shortcomings. It's unscientific, subject to interpretation, and sometimes wildly inaccurate. Two people who attended the same party might tell radically different accounts.

So, too, each Gospel writer has a different emphasis. Even within the Gospel of John, there are inconsistencies: “Jesus was deeply *troubled*” (13:21), but in the next chapter Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be *troubled*” (14:1).

Those who enjoy stories listen beneath the words. Their primary interest is the meaning stories give our experiences. We don't read the Gospels primarily for scientific accuracy or historical fact but to follow Jesus better.

We read through the lens of a human

author who will sometimes shade, condense, or exaggerate. Sometimes we may also need to read biblical interpretation, but most important is our response. There's an old saying: the Gospel gives the chapter headings; we write the texts in our lives.

Too Good to Be True?

The Gospels have been misused to incite guilt. Some people may need that stern correction to luxuriating while others starve. But many hard-working people are simply trying to survive, raise families, and do their jobs while being as generous as possible with their time and treasure. They certainly don't need another guilt trip!

What we may find harder than guilt is the Gospels' insistence on how splendid we are. Jesus walked among the diseased, smelly, and sweaty, and assured them that even in poverty, mourning, or persecution, they were blessed. Mired in our own problems, do we struggle with *good* news?

Admittedly, the central message is hard to absorb. We, limited and flawed, are made in his divine image. Throughout the Gospels, the message recurs: You are not a slave. You are a friend and adopted child with an eternal inheritance—not condemned to futility or the finality of death. +



Lord, you are the Word of God that shows me what is good, right, and true. Make me a faithful witness to your Word.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 23–28

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 65:17–21 / Jn 4:43–54

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 47:1–9, 12 / Jn 5:1–16

Wednesday, The Annunciation
of the Lord: Is 7:10–14; 8:10 /
Heb 10:4–10 / Lk 1:26–38

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Ex 32:7–14 / Jn 5:31–47

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Wis 2:1a, 12–22 / Jn 7:1–2, 10, 25–30

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 11:18–20 / Jn 7:40–53



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent (A)

March 29, 2020

Our Resurrection

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The raising of Lazarus is a decisive miracle in Christ's public ministry. It leads to increased hostility and gives the Jewish leaders both an excuse and a motivation to actively seek the death of Jesus. This Gospel episode is so important that John dedicates an entire chapter to the story.

What is the most important message of this miracle? Without faith in Jesus, there is no resurrection: a fitting message for a Pietro Annigoni painting in Europe

right after World War II. In Annigoni's *The Resurrection of Lazarus*, Mary is at the feet of Jesus while Martha is on her feet pouring out her heart. The artist evokes a landscape of death and destruction, one too often observed in postwar Europe. Colors of decay abound. Stones are piled up like rubble. The trees are burnt, scrawny, and twisted as if after an air raid. It is ugly, rugged, barren, and dry. A small group of people have gathered to weep at the tomb.

Jesus is the only source of color and life. After Martha affirms her faith in Jesus and the resurrection, he lifts up his hand and calls out. The onlookers peer inside, perhaps having heard the sounds of rustling coming from the cave.

The message of this artwork is clear to anyone struggling with the bondage of a destructive past. Jesus wants to speak words of life and raise us from the grips of death, war, and despair. Believe in Jesus and he will raise you up! +

*Jesus wants to speak
words of life and raise us
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war, and despair.*

A Word from Pope Francis

I invite you to think for a moment, in silence, here: Where is my interior necrosis? Where is the dead part of my soul? Where is my tomb? ...And to remove the stone, to take away the stone of shame and allow the Lord to say to us, as he said to Lazarus: "Come out!"

—Homily, April 6, 2014



Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 37:12-14

You shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and make you come up out of them, my people!

Romans 8:8-11

The one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.

John 11:1-45 or John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

Jesus told [Martha], "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How is your Lenten journey bringing you deeper in faith and closer to new life in Jesus?
- Has Jesus raised you from destruction or despair? How?

Healing After Divorce

By Susan K. Rowland

I was divorced six years ago. There was no funeral, even though divorce is one of the cruelest deaths there is: the death of a marriage. Most members of my ex-husband's family, with whom I had been close for thirty years, disappeared from my life. Some were puzzled, embarrassed, or even angry. Fortunately, I had friends who called to see how I was doing and who gave me the hugs I so badly needed. But I wept alone, ate alone, and struggled with finances. Suddenly, I had nowhere to go for holidays. There were times when I felt like an outcast, like one of the lepers of Jesus' time.

Divorce is a death, worse than physical death in some ways. There is no outpouring of support and sympathy that physical death brings. Instead, the divorced person often feels alone and disgraced, especially in the parish community, which rightfully champions marriage. Also, the former spouse is still around. The initial pain of divorce is often aggravated by disputes over child support and visitation, adult children's marriages, holidays, and remarriage.

There are few people in the Church who will not experience divorce personally or through a family member, friend, or coworker. What do divorced Catholics need? What attitude should the



rest of us adopt? Here are some thoughts about the care of those who have experienced the "death" of a divorce.

In the Parish

Every parish should offer some sort of support program for the divorced and separated. Programs such as Beginning Experience

(beginningexperience.org) and DivorceCare (divorcecare.org) can be helpful to the newly divorced. In addition, many dioceses offer divorced/separated support. Check your diocesan website for information. Ideally, such a program should combine practical instruction about finances, child support, legalities, and Church annulments with informal time for people to share their stories and support one another.

Healing is the Goal

For the individual who has divorced and for his or her family, healing is the first priority—not judgment, blame, or explanations. Healing cannot happen completely until forgiveness happens. Since forgiveness will take time, the divorced person needs to be ready to forgive. He or she needs to say to God, "I want to forgive. I can't now, but I want to try. Please, Jesus, love him/her for me."

Forgiveness has two components:

1) letting go of the person who wronged

you, trusting that you can leave matters in God's capable hands and 2) praying for the one who has wronged you. No one can intercede for someone the way an ex-spouse can.

Decisions, Decisions

Newly divorced people must make many decisions. Some are internal: "Who am I now?" Others are external: moving, changing jobs, returning to college, volunteering. As painful as it is, divorce is an open door for people who have suffered through a bad marriage. They have agonized and struggled, hoped and pretended, lived in denial and then faced the painful truth.

The divorced need to get on with their lives. If you are a friend or family member, encourage them to do so. Let them talk about whatever they are taking on. We do this for the widowed. The divorced, too, need encouragement and support for their plans and new identity.

Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians contains what is known as the "love chapter." Usually read at weddings, it's just as appropriate when a marriage ends: "Love is patient, love is kind....It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (13:4-8). +



Lord, your life-giving spirit fills me with hope and joy. In times of trouble, help me place all my trust in you.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 30–April 4

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62
or 13:41c–62 / Jn 8:1–11

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Nm 21:4–9 / Jn 8:21–30

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 3:14–20, 91–92, 95 / Jn 8:31–42

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Gn 17:3–9 / Jn 8:51–59

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 20:10–13 / Jn 10:31–42

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 37:21–28 / Jn 11:45–56

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

March 29, 2020

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