



MEDITATIONS ON THE
COLLECTS OF LENT

Trinity Episcopal Church

Lent 2019

A HOLY LENT...

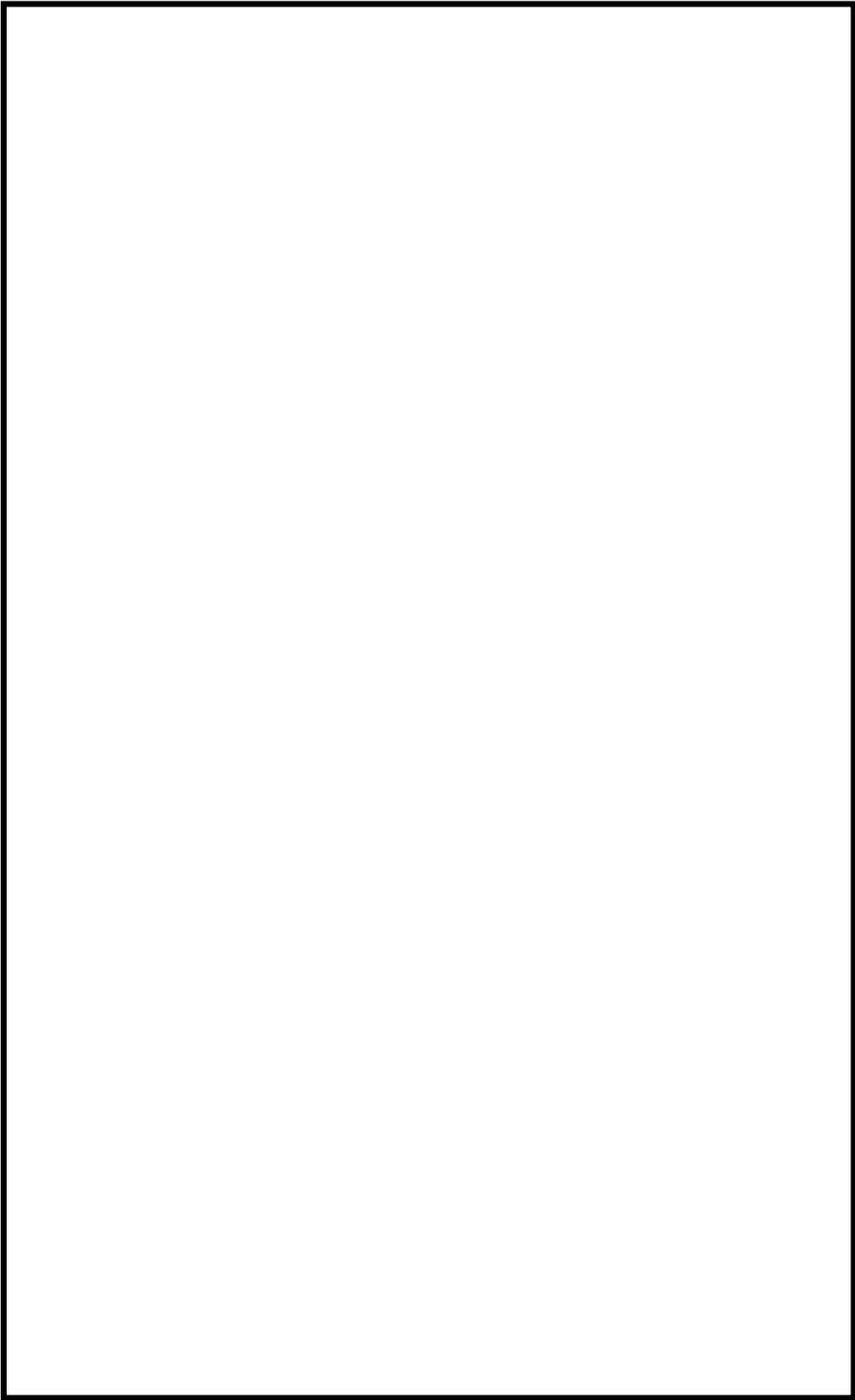
We are the children of God! It seems so simple to hear it said or read it in a book of meditations such as the one you are reading right now. But as you meditate on those six little words, you may begin to realize the sobriety they carry with their implications.

Consider that as children of God, we are children of the divine, created in His image, a part of God. To be a part of that image, is in its complexity and mystery, is almost unfathomable, like what it might be like to be a bird that soars through the sky and sees the world in a way that only a bird can see it; but infinitely more. As Christians, we look forward with great joy to our Solemn Feast Day, when we celebrate the miracle of the Resurrection, freedom from sin, the enslaving chains of which are destroyed and we are free because of God's sacrificial love. But before we get to the greatest day in Christianity, we must first, and necessarily, traverse the desert of the human lifetime and the final hours of Christ's life in the season of Lent.

I have this vision of Lent as a desert experience where I must patiently live the last few hours of Christ's life alongside him as I worship in the church and live my reality as a Benedictine Brother. In the desert experience of Lent, I hunger and I thirst; I sweat and I bleed; and I shed tears of remorse on the cusp of tears of joy. I realize that beyond the desert is the hope I continue to search for, but with the added understanding that hope is not something that I will earn but is a gift cut from the same cloth as faith in God and that God will overcome the world. God will bridge the gaping valleys that separate us from Him; valleys widened by sin. The good news in that is that as we observe the season of Lent and strive to heal, to seek forgiveness, to understand, to look forward to freedom, and pursue God, He too is pursuing us with an equal striving.

I am reminded of a story from the ancient Desert Fathers of Scete, Christian monks who chose to live their lives in the desert in constant prayer and pursuit of God apart from the world: “An elder was asked by a certain soldier if God would forgive a sinner. And he said to him: Tell me, beloved, if your cloak is torn, will you throw it away? The soldier replied and said: No. I will mend it and put it back on. The elder said to him: If you take care of your cloak, will God not be merciful to his own image?” Let that sink in for a moment and throughout Lent as you read the following meditations, written by fellow parishioners. These meditations on the Collects of Lent are their prayerful responses united with the prayers of the Church throughout the season. As you meditate with them over each week (and there may only be one meditation per week), consider your place among them and your life as being made in the image of God, as reflections of God. As much as Lent is about purification, it is also about recognition of the love that is within us that echoes God to the world. Whatever is in us that does not echo Him can become clearer and we can begin the process of mending and healing in the presence of the Great Physician. May the season of Lent be fruitful for you in your prayer and be truly holy.

—Brother Jacob Luke



ASH WEDNESDAY

March 6

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

God hates nothing he has created. God forgives all that express regret for their sins. We are creations of God and He will make us new if we respectfully express remorse and grief for our sins and acknowledge our wretchedness. You may obtain from our merciful God perfect forgiveness. Forgiveness is given to us through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reign within each of us, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (God) and One God forever. Amen.

—Mary Stewart Stephens

The words “create” and “acknowledge” emanate from this collect, harkening to the time before the recognition of sin existed, where the guise of ignorance held us captive. It invokes a more thorough understanding of the Edenic covenant and how mankind’s fall from Grace clearly parallels how we examine our lives today. When God created us in his image, he looked at what he had done and said that it was good (a statement that I could not agree more with). He gave us autonomy over the garden as long as one stipulation was

followed – “Do not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen 2:17) So we ruled over the garden being free from sin, never acknowledging that sin even existed. And why should we? Why should we question “good?” It is human nature for us to become pleased with habitual happiness. It’s how complacency gets started, but without the acknowledgement of sin or an understanding of the repercussions this sin can yield, it is how we fall farther from Grace.

A story literally as old as time: the serpent appealed to mankind’s thirst for knowledge to where we eventually partook in the forbidden fruit. Why would God grant us a free will, yet present us with the temptation of omniscience, knowing that we would choose to disobey? He has been teaching since day one, and it is a lesson that should still be reminded of today. We are not so lucky as to only have to follow one request. In today’s society, there are thousands of choices and temptations presented to us daily. Without the humility of our inherent sinfulness, our decisions could meander us onto a path of eternal damnation. Although we should recognize this lesson everyday, it is within the Lenten season where our recognition of sin and temptation culminates. So we plead to God to “create...new and contrite hearts, that we...acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, perfect remission and forgiveness...”

—Mark McLean

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

March 7

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

I have always found the language of the Collects beautiful and amazing. As Bailey reads them in church, they almost sound like music flowing off the tongue, but seldom do I stop to analyze the words and look for their meaning. In reading over today's Collect and pondering what this Lenten season is supposed to like in my life, I am struck by the verbs *direct* and *further* which lead then to *glorify* and *obtain*.

Too often my focus of Lent is on the self-sacrificing nature of the liturgical season. What should I give up this year? Or even more recently, what practice should I take on? While these are important aspects of Lent, in reading this collect several times over the past few days, I'm wondering if I have missed the mark.

Perhaps the only Lenten practice I need to focus on is time in prayer. Time with God to deliberately seek His direction...to desire His guidance so that through my work I may further His kingdom. Unfortunately receiving God's direction is not as simple as praying the collect above. I can only wish that upon saying 'amen,' I would receive an email from God directing my next steps. Instead, it will take the work of deliberate

listening...time to be still and quiet...time to discern in what direction He is leading me.

For me, making the time to discern God's direction in my life is difficult. I am pretty sure giving up chocolate would much easier! My resources are stretched thin as many people desire my attention and energy. This collect reminds me, though, that the time spent praying and listening is time well spent. His direction will lead us to a life of glorifying His name and obtaining the gift of eternal life.

— Anne Gill

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

March 8

Support us, O Lord, with your gracious favor through the fast we have begun; that as we observe it by bodily self-denial, so we may fulfill it with inner sincerity of heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Fasting, how and why? Do I give something up and/or should I commit to add more devotion during Lent? What is expected of my experience?

There is no right or wrong answer, the outcome is the important part and that is where you begin. If giving something up allows you to focus on your relationship with God, then this is your path. If taking on something, i.e., studying the Bible,

praying or reading these devotions, help open you to God's call, then this is your path.

Use this taking away and/or adding to, to allow you to see yourself as you are. Find your weakness and work through your temptations as Jesus taught us. Be open to reflect on how these changes allow God's grace to come to you this Lenten Season.

—Laurent & Mike Cadden

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

March 9

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth your right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

How comforting to be reminded that God is always with us in times of trouble, as well as, in times of happiness. God knows our needs and dangers without us asking for help. A few years ago, my husband was critically ill following heart surgery. Many days I didn't know if he was going to live and was so distraught, I didn't know what or how to pray for him. God wrapped his arms tightly around us and took care of us in those dark days.

—Kay Cruthirds

COLLECT FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

March 10, 2019

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Temptation ought to be added to the list of traits that define humans: opposable thumbs, bipedalism, and susceptibility to temptation. It's not the same as responding to instinct, that thing we share with other sentient creatures. It asks that we reflect on what is helpful and what is not, for ourselves and for others. To consider what comes after the gratification and at what cost. No one expects the lioness to pause mid-stride and think, "What has this antelope ever done to me? Maybe it's time to change my diet." Those kinds of thoughts are ours.

Very human thoughts given that most temptation operates in the arena of wants rather than needs - no matter how earnestly we argue that a want is an absolutely-gotta-have need. In Luke's telling of Jesus' clarifying time in the desert, Satan negotiates with three much larger incentives. Freedom from hunger in the moment, freedom from oppression and freedom from suffering and death. Who'd argue with that? Except the price is too high, and Jesus says no.

The petitions at the end of The Lord's Prayer are so perceptive about our lot, the ones susceptible to temptation. Please, I'd rather not be put to the test, but if I must, help me rise to the occasion.

—Leslie Flukinger

COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

March 17

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy” – always to have mercy! Yet how we often focus on the power of God, the judgement of God, the vengeance of God. More than power or judgement, however, we need God’s mercy. We need God’s mercy to redeem us from our failings and we need to show God’s mercy to those we meet in our journey through this life.

My favorite Bible verse is Micah 6:8 –

“He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

As creatures made in the image of God, we acknowledge this call in our Baptismal Covenant --

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being?

And we respond -- I will, with God’s help.

In this Lenten Season, may we with penitent hearts humbly walk with all of God’s children in justice and mercy – in the full glory of God.

—Bob Howard

COLLECT FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

March 24

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

What a challenge to admit we are powerless to help ourselves! After all, we work, pay our debts, and care for our homes and families.

However, whose name do we call when a bad accident happens, when we look into a doctor's hesitant eyes, or when we face death?

Whom do we ask to forgive our hurtful thoughts of jealousy, anger, and frustration?

When we can admit our powerlessness and submit to God, the Holy Spirit lightens our burdens and fills us with comfort and peace.

We turn to God as our refuge, and trust God to keep our bodies and souls in his light and love.

We sing *A mighty fortress is our god, a bulwark never failing.* (Hymn 687)

If thou but trust in God to guide thee, and hope in him through all thy

ways, he'll give thee strength whate'er betide thee, and bear thee through the evil days. (Hymn 635)

Keep far our foes, give peace at home, where thou art guide, no ill can come. (Hymn 503)

— Annette Heim

COLLECT FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 31

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Each day when I pray the Divine Office, I am reminded that while I am praying ancient words, the words nourish my life and my soul. It is bread for the journey and sustenance for the soul. Jesus gives us the strength we need to keep our faith and our hope. When one or the other is waning or we are having difficulty, we turn to him and seek his nourishment. This collect reminds me that God provided nourishment to the Israelites with manna from Heaven; that Jesus fed the five thousand and the four thousand; and that Jesus gave us the blessed sacrament of his Body and Blood that long ago night in the upper room. Jesus as “bread for the world” is the one who nourishes us on the journey toward wholeness and redemption. This nourishment, be it the holy scriptures, holy communion, or any of the sacraments, is for the good of our souls from the God who

loves and wants a deep and abiding relationship with each of us. He provides for us today as He did for our ancestors so long ago in such special ways. Thanks be to God that while we are traversing the Lenten desert, he is still nourishing us with the balm of his love and cooling our hearts with a love that is eternal to remind us that he has not left us comfortless and continues to walk with us. We are the children of God and He is always taking care of us.

—Brother Jacob Luke

COLLECT FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

April 7

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

It was the day before my first spinal surgery in March of 2007. The next day they were going to fuse all the vertebrae in my neck to prevent the arthritis from doing further damage to my spinal cord. It was major surgery, and I was scared to death. I had my missal sized prayer book with me at the hospital, and this was the collect of the day for morning prayer. I remember reading it and thinking, “Well, God, this is appropriate!” This

was certainly one sinner needing to have “unruly wills and affections” brought “into order.” And my world was certainly a place of “swift and varied changes.” What I got that morning was a sense of God’s presence, giving me a place to “fix my heart.” My mind and heart were all over the place, and God seemed to say, “Look at me, Terry. Fix your heart on me. I am with you always, through all things. And this is where true joys are found.”

I’d like to say that the fear totally went away. It didn’t, but it did diminish. I got through the surgery the next day, and over the next years experienced countless joys in my life. There were weddings, and the birth of grandchildren. There was travel and time with my family and friends. And opportunities to serve and feel useful and fulfilled. And many other blessings too many to list. Who could ask for more joy??

When I volunteered to write a meditation, I decided to just let chance determine which collect to reflect on and this is the collect that was assigned. God does work in amazing ways! I opened that same prayer book, and realized which one it was because of the note next to it: “3/29/07 Day before neck surgery”.

What are the unruly wills and affections of us sinners today? Oh, they are certainly there! I’m sure for all of us. What do we fear? Where are we angry or depressed? What seems to overwhelm us? May God grant each of us the grace to love what God commands and desire what God promises. And “may our hearts be fixed where true joys are to be found.”

—Rev. Terry Wysong

COLLECT FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY

April 14

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

This collect takes us to a place we do not always see in the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It represents his humility and sets an example for us. What does this mean for us? I believe we all too often overlook that when God became incarnate in the form of Jesus, taking human form, it was the most incredible action God could have taken. Imagine it! The creator became a creature! This would be like a sculptor becoming a statue, a painter becoming a work of art or a carpenter becoming a bookcase. The most powerful being in the universe experiencing what it is like to be one of us!

And then, when confronting false accusations from the very people he came to save, Jesus submitted to the most barbaric and humiliating death conceived by humankind. He had the power to prevent this painful death. After all, he said in the Garden when he was arrested, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" But Jesus does not appeal to God in Heaven. He allows the authorities to nail him to a cross where he dies in excruciating pain.

As Paul describe this act in his letter to the Church in Philippi, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with

God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death -- even death on a cross."

So, what does this mean for us? The collect says we should "walk in the ways of his suffering," for only when we die to our ways can we be raised in his resurrection. As we begin this holiest of weeks, from the heights of the Palm Procession through the depths of Good Friday and finally to that greatest of heights we call Easter morning, let us keep in mind that Jesus Christ has, in fact, given us an example of how we should live our lives the rest of the year, through both suffering and celebration.

—David Clothier

Each time I read this collect, the phrase "take upon him our nature" resonates through me just as Trinity's carillon reverberates through Midtown. What is our nature? What piece of us, of our humanity, is Jesus Christ taking upon himself? It is our indiscretion as to the choices we make and our blatant disregard for the will of God. The fact that he sacrificed his only son for our sake is incredible: we as sinful mortals gained the right to remain on this earth longer than his son. As I have recently become a father, I understand how difficult of a challenge this must have been, especially for the sake of beings who constantly disobey and consistently deny the will of their father. But this is exactly the lesson we are supposed to learn and admire. We are to acknowledge the fact that God and Jesus gave themselves for us, and through this understanding we are to gain the humility of our sinfulness. And it is on Palm Sunday where we begin the steep ascension to the climax of our faith. We are supposed to recognize the sacrifices that not only Jesus

Christ made, but also those of his father, our father.

—Mark McLean

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

April 15

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

For me Holy Week is almost too hard to bear as I read and hear the passages for the week. They remind us of the horror and pain our Lord endured for us. We often read descriptions in obituaries of someone “dying peacefully surrounded by his/her family and friends”. Our Lord had some family and friends at his crucifixion but his death was certainly not peaceful. As we traverse our life’s journey we can make our way knowing that God is right there with us every step of the way. And one day we can joyfully and peacefully take our place at His side because He faced the suffering and pain for us. Thanks be to God for giving us this wonderful gift of His Son who takes away our sins and offers us comfort! Open your hearts and let Him in!

—Pat Rodgers

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

April 16

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

A little over a year ago, my husband gave me a beautiful cross necklace. I do not wear much, if any, jewelry...most days just my wedding rings and this cross necklace. Seldom, though, do I stop to give thought to the instrument of torture hanging from my neck. Or what my wearing of this cross means to me as a Christian or to others that see it on me?

The collect today explains the meaning all to well: you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. My cross reminds me that in Christ's death I am promised eternal life.

The promise does, of course, come with a call to action. Christ tells his disciples in Mark's gospel, "if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Taking up the cross of Jesus is a walk that leads to suffering and rejection. It involves denying one's self. And that is not always easy.

In his thoughts on the cross and discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *The Cost of Discipleship*, "Only when we have become completely oblivious of self, are we ready to bear the cross for his sake." We are self-centered creatures and denying our needs and desires is no small feat. The needs of others are always before us. Our call is to remove the blinders that allow us to see only our own wants and instead to look out

into the world with eyes to see Christ in our brothers and sisters in need.

Denying one's self is the path to life with Christ and one that I will remember from here out whenever I glance at the cross around my neck.

— Anne Gill

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK
April 17

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The season of Lent and Holy Week itself always comes at the height of spring, a season where our part of the country truly puts on its most beautiful colors. In the midst of blossoming azaleas and dogwoods, it's easy to forget the cold breezes and stark dull greens of winter. Like the passing seasons, our lives too drift from one event to the next with periods of rushing or slowing down, of happiness and of sadness. And for me, recently, I've been rushing along in a time of joy that I've been focusing less on the blessings God has given me that I am in danger of growing complacent.

But with Lent and Holy Week approaching, I am usually reminded to slow down, to turn inward and to reflect silently

on the very thing this collect mentions: the inevitable suffering Christ endured to offer us redemption. To accept our suffering gracefully--or even joyfully--is one of the greatest challenges any of us can face. I read these lines like a punch in the gut, certainly like the bursting of a bubble. But I stop and reflect at the times of grief in my own life and I was struck a particular moment when my father was diagnosed with a terminal illness. I did not accept that news with anything but a deep-seated anger. But I watched my father bear the news and work through chemo treatments with a quiet dignity that humbled me beyond words.

After much soul-seeking and prayer, I learned to find accept the reality of his cancer and the limited time my family had with my father. In time, we all learned to seek out and hold onto the joy we found in every moment we spent with him. And by accepting that I had no control over this situation, I could finally accept the strength that only God can give and the comfort I needed. And that is the message I take away in times of sorrow: that suffering is inevitable, a part of life we must learn to endure by seeking out God's strengthening love, that we must learn to look for light even in the darkest of places.

—Katie Finnegan

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 18

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood...” I am struck with great awe for Jesus in this collect. The accompanying gospel lesson for this day depicts Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and exhorting them to do the same for one another. He has set an example for how they, as disciples, should serve those who travel the way of the good news. On this same night, Jesus set another incredible example, the giving of himself. The act of Holy Communion is more than an act on our part of honoring his memory and what he did for us, but to celebrate our Salvation that is at hand “thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord.” In Greek, this remembrance is called *anamnesis*, or recollection. We recall Christ’s life, death, and ultimate resurrection in the Holy Eucharist. In effect, we are recalling the cost of our salvation in recollection of the most precious gift we can receive, and we celebrate it by participating in the Sacrament. As Christ gives us himself in the Eucharist, we give him ourselves. In this way, we are living into “these holy mysteries.” We may never fully understand the gravity of what has been accomplished for us while we walk the Earth, but one thing we do know, is that it is because of and the result of love. Let us return the same to Christ in thanksgiving.

—Brother Jacob Luke

GOOD FRIDAY

April 19

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

We've studied a great deal in EFM this year about the humanity of Christ and the divinity of Christ. It's imagining the human man of Jesus... What it says about his restraint, his selflessness, his personal commitment and his willingness to do what he did for all our sakes forevermore.

Just when the weight of personal sin had us held down, he decided we deserved his grace. All of us. Sinners all.

I grow anxious of the stone being rolled over the past year's regrets and transgressions every year. I am ready to have that weight lifted by his timeless gift.

—Cindy Nicholason

HOLY SATURDAY

April 20

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

How should we spend this day? We know what happened yesterday. Jesus was nailed to the cross and died. We know what is going to happen next. Jesus is resurrected. But if we are to truly experience this day as it was intended, we must spend it like the disciples did on that first Holy Saturday, knowing only what happened on Golgotha and not knowing what is to happen tomorrow.

This day is different. It is the only day of the year during which Holy Communion is forbidden. As the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer state in the Proper Liturgy for Holy Saturday, "There is no celebration of the Eucharist on this day."

In spite of what Jesus told them, that the Son of Man must suffer death and after three days rise again (a paraphrase of Mark 8:31), his closest companions either denied him or ran away and hid. They thought that their long-awaited messiah, the one who was to liberate them from the oppression of the Romans was dead and their dreams shattered. This day, what we now call Holy Saturday, was not a day to celebrate anything, much less the thanksgiving of the eucharistic meal.

So how will you spend the day? I feel confident that you will not deny Christ nor run away and hide, but I hope you will take some time to think about what it must have been like for those

disciples in Jerusalem almost two millenia ago. Think about how you would have thought, what emotions you would have felt, not knowing what was going to happen the next day.

Or perhaps you will spend the day like Mary Magdalene and the other women who were preparing to go to the tomb the next morning to honor their friend. They did not know what was going to happen, but they did not deny Jesus nor did they run away. They were there at the foot of the cross yesterday and tomorrow they will witness the Resurrection. But today, they waited and prepared.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

—David Clothier

COLLECT FOR EASTER SUNDAY

April 21

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

“Buy us back” – that’s the harsh definition of the phrase “for our redemption”. It means that we were sold. It means that we have been someplace where we did not belong. It means we’ve been under the care of someone who did not have our best interests at heart. That’s the harsh message that comes through during the season of Lent. God has not abandoned us; rather, we have lost our way in every sense of the word. As such, is it any wonder that we struggle to find hope or contentment or peace in this crazy world?

We are “bought back” by the gift of God’s “only-begotten Son” at the price of his death upon the cross. Since The Way (the earliest name for what became known as Christianity) and its adherence to a crucified Teacher became known to others, it has met with savage criticisms from people in all quarters, including some within The Way. “This is barbaric!” “This is unnecessary!” Indeed when we are not critical of it, we struggle to wrap our minds around an act that is both cosmic/grandiose in nature as well as deeply penetrating to the very being of who we are.

Easter is the connection point. It connects us to our time as a child where we hoped to grow up to be like our parents or like

another adult we idolized – we want to do “big boy” or “big girl” stuff as my son says! It takes us back to our youth where, even for those less privileged, the frontier of life ahead lays in front of us to realize our dreams or perhaps escape and find something better than the life we have now. It reminds us of the hope when we look into the eyes of our child, grandchild, niece, nephew, or godchild and see that indeed we want a better world and a chance to realize the fullness of their potential.

Imagine then that, when God’s face peers into ours and into our very souls, there is a desire on God’s part, like we possess, to give His children the best gift and the best life He can present. This gift is literally his life. But the end of this gift is not a bloody mess on a slab of wood. The end of this gift is that we are given the very life that God has, a life that restores, gives hope, and helps us realize that the only thing that matters is to abide in the endless depths of God’s light and love. This is where we began, and this is where God desires more than any other thing for us to rest.

Lent reminds us of the need we have to change to realize this gift. The cross helps us to understand how far away from this gift we truly are. The cross and Easter together remind us of how far God is willing to go – even more than those of us who love our children more than anything – to take us, love us, and bring us home where we will know Him, know each other in Him, and be like Him in every respect. This hope springs up every day as Easter is not a one-time event but rather God’s tireless work each and every day to bestow this new life for us and in us. Simply put, our only response needed to this gift is “Thank You”, lived out in every choice and every relationship we have. Today, may you find every occasion a means to give thanks to God for all that you are and all that you are still to become.

—Father Bailey

Lent 2019

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COVER ART:

“Christ Carrying the Cross .”

c. 1565 by Tiziano Vecellio (Titian)