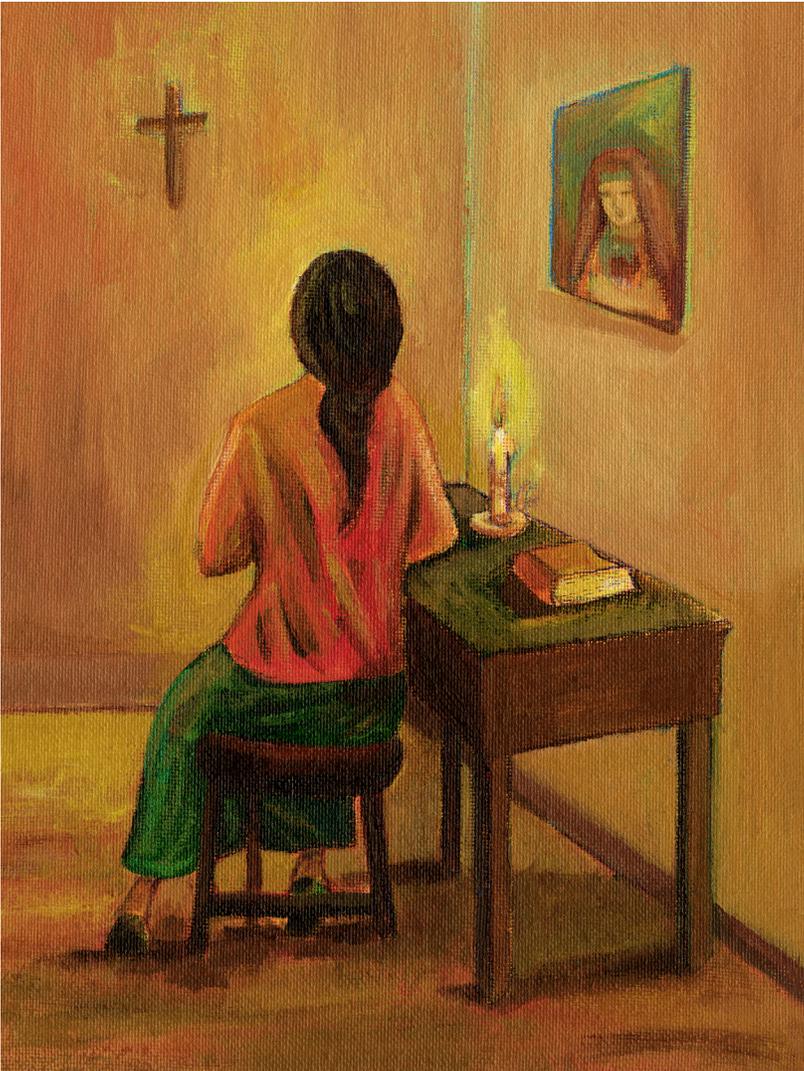


ASH WEDNESDAY



In this Time

O God of mercy,
who is slow to anger and rich
in kindness,
grant us, as we begin our Lenten journey,
contrite hearts that long
for reconciliation
and steadfast spirits that proclaim
your love.

In this acceptable time,
soften our calloused hearts,
watch over us, and keep us from all sin.
In this season of repentance,
help us turn toward the light of your
Son, Jesus Christ,
and away from selfish ambition.
In this period of renewal,
open our ears to hear your voice,
which calls us out of darkness,
so that with clean hearts we can forever
proclaim your praise.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Sin Is Tricky

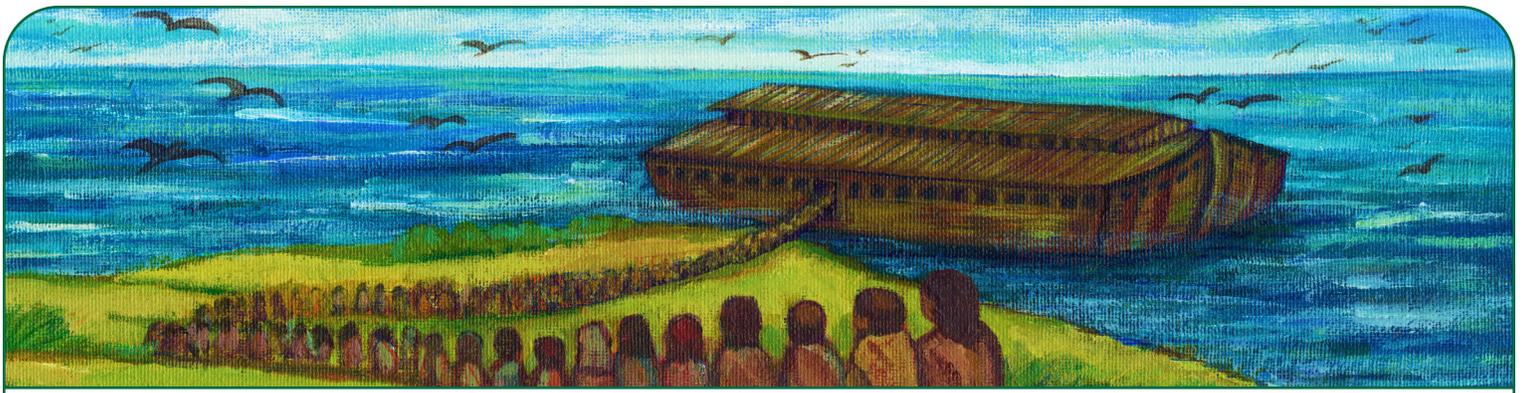


Today's Readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18. The Lenten season calls us to slow down and consider the areas in our life that need healing and transformation. This retreat-like time is an intense period for prayer and cleaning the “garbage” from our hearts. With the elect, those who are preparing for the sacraments of initiation, we take this time to discern what is sinful in our lives and name the good God is working within us. Sin is tricky and tends to grab hold of us and become habit. Sin begins to blind us from God’s love.

In this season, we must examine each area of our life to uncover the darkness of sin. Take heed of the prophet Joel’s words. He calls us to repent and return to the Lord.

Repentance leads to conversion, which requires discipline, perseverance, and practice. The three disciplines of the Lenten season—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—help us open ourselves to God’s goodness and strengthen us for a mission united to Christ. During these forty days, allow these disciplines to become habits that replace sin, move you to reflect on your life in Christ, and immerse you in the Paschal Mystery.

In the Gospel, Jesus instructs us not to publicly flaunt how we pray, fast, or give alms. As you meditate on the words of the psalm, think about what you might give up (fast), how you might pray, and where or to what you might give alms as a way of deeply entering the season of Lent and purifying your heart.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 12

Perseverance

In the opening of his letter, St. James' describes himself as "servant of God" and his audience as the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion." From this greeting, we know that he is writing to a dispersed community. James tells us that the testing of faith produces perseverance. When has your faith been tested? It can be all too easy to grow weary with testing, but prayer can help strengthen us to live more faithfully. Approaching Lent, create a prayer plan to guide you this season. *Today's Readings: James 1:1–11; Psalm 119:67, 71, 72, 75, 76; Mark 8:11–13.*

Tuesday, February 13

Temptation

Have you ever blamed God for tempting you? James teaches us that it is not God who tempts us but that our desires lure us from the light. Once you identify the temptations in your life, offer them in prayer and allow them to be transformed for building up the Kingdom of God. The Eucharist and prayer will help us persevere in the faith and reject temptations. Today, make note of any temptations, even those you might present to another. *Today's Readings: James 1:12–18; Psalm 94:12–13a, 14–15, 18–19; Mark 8:14–21.*

Wednesday, February 14

Ash Wednesday

One way to pay attention to the spiritual life during Lent is to spend time with images found in the day's readings. Set aside time to read and be silent with today's psalm, paying particular attention to the first stanza. What images, questions, or thoughts arise? As you are signed with ashes today, commit yourself to spending more time with the day's readings and heeding Christ's call to conversion. *Today's Readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18.*

Thursday, February 15

Life and Death

Moses' words are a powerful reminder that God is life. Our readings invite us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow. By doing this, we say yes to the law of God's love and therefore choose the path of life. When we give ourselves to Christ and strive to follow him in every way, life is radically different from what the world presents. As a family, make paper crosses and place them as a centerpiece for prayer during this season. Take time to talk about each day's Gospel. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 30:15–20; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4 and 6; Luke 9:22–25.*

Friday, February 16

Fasting

Do you fast only because the Church has told you to do so? Isaiah's words strongly urge us against empty fasting or ritual. For Isaiah, fasting is intimately connected to the good of the community, especially the poor and suffering. Does our fasting lead us to contemplate the mystery of Christ and our call to accompany the most vulnerable and ignored in our society? This practice is intended to purify and change us; it is intended to help strengthen us for the mission. Could your family unite in a practice of fasting as a prayer for the poor and suffering? *Today's Readings: Isaiah 58:1–9a; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 18–19; Matthew 9:14–15.*

Saturday, February 17

Justice

The First Reading continues where the reading from Isaiah left off yesterday. Isaiah's message is one of justice. The community has a responsibility to care for the poor and suffering. When we walk in the ways of the Lord, our hearts yearn to serve our neighbors. When Jesus calls us to take up the cross, it's not just a burden, but the sign of hope and resurrection. Who in your community needs to be fed, clothed, and sheltered? At the end of this week, take a moment for an Ignatian examen. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 58:9b–14; Psalm 86:1–2, 3–4, 5–6; Luke 5:27–32.*

