

Our Daily Bread

Exposition of the Readings
of Catholic Mass

for

LENT

James H. Kurt

© 2004, 2019 James H. Kurt. All Rights Reserved.

Published by Children of Light Publications
ISBN: 978-1-7332154-0-4

Our Daily Bread, original work containing a page of
writing for **every Mass** of the liturgical calendar,
published by AuthorHouse 2004 (727 pp.)
ISBN: 978-1-4208-0839-7 (sc)

Nihil Obstat:
Rev. Anthony Figueiredo
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:
+ Most Reverend John J. Myers, J.C.D., D.D.
Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey
July 15, 2004

The **Nihil Obstat** and **Imprimatur** are official declarations
that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal error.
No implication is contained therein that those who have
granted the **Nihil Obstat** and **Imprimatur** agree with the
contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

Scripture (and commentary) quotes taken from
New St. Joseph Sunday Missal,
Catholic Book Publishing, N.J., 1999
and
Vatican II Weekday Missal, Daughters of St. Paul,
Boston, Mass., 1975.

All quotes are from the day's readings, unless noted.
Some liberty has been taken in capitalization,
particularly re the male pronoun for God.

**for Daily Communicants
and All Those Who Hunger for the Word of God**

**“I will inspire you with wisdom
which your adversaries will be unable to resist.”**

Lk. 21:15

Table of Contents

Author's Notes	vi
Introduction	vii

1. First Five Weeks

Ash Wednesday.....	1
First Week	7
Second Week	20
Third Week	33
Fourth Week	46
Fifth Week	58

2. Holy Week 71

3. Solemnities and Feasts in Lent 79

About the Author	84
Other Books by James Kurt	85

Author's Notes

Before Beginning:

While reading the Scriptures through three times (before the dawn of each day), I shall mine their message by seeking parallel meaning in the separate passages and pointing up a line from one which epitomizes their complementary significance.

It is from the Scriptures themselves I shall draw water.

Upon Completion:

In the process of composing this work I have discovered a certain harmony inherent in the juxtaposition of any two (or three...) Scripture passages. This is indicative of the fact that sacred Scripture is whole, is, in essence, one Word, and so all its parts are integrally related.

Finally, this exposition is by no means an exhaustive reflection of even my own understanding of the readings of Catholic Mass, for each time I read them something new, or some different emphasis, do I find. Holy Scripture is indeed an inexhaustible ocean of wisdom.

Overall:

I have read the Bible cover to cover five times (ten at this publication) and written daily about the Scriptures for Mass for eight years – five in a spiritual diary, two on this work, one on chanted verses for each Mass... and then a sentence a day. More recently I have published two other books on Scripture, one surveying the Old Testament and another the Gospels.

May the Light of God's Word shine forth here for you.

Introduction

I find that the general bent of naturalist inquiry into Scripture, so predominant in our modern times, ironically makes it approaching impossible for the well-studied exegetes to see beyond the nose of their collective face. I have found their understanding as deep as a puddle (which serves but to muddy the ground for a time), where Scripture is, as Augustine tells us, a vast ocean which can never be drained. All this skeptical questioning of Holy Scripture is as the cat chasing his tail: it is useless activity; and if the cat should somehow succeed, he would only injure himself.

We should not ask ourselves what the writer is saying but what *God* is saying to us in these verses – why are they here in this way? Or do we not believe it is an inspired Word written to His desire? I find no point in questioning matters in Scripture unless the literal is clearly absurd. Obviously Jesus is not an actual door; but there is no reason to doubt the hundreds of years men are said to have lived (for instance) as if God, who created us to be immortal in the beginning – and with whom we will live eternally in the end – cannot allow man to continue alive as long as He pleases and decide to curtail his life span at a later time. Nor is He unable to stop the sun in the sky, which He Himself created, or perform any other miracle as spoken in His Word. This, and so much else which is doubted, is clearly within God's power and bears investigation only by those who lack faith. And these will never find answer anyway. (The Word will never change; come as a child to it.)

Even yesterday, at the end of the Pentecost novena, the commentator in my missal writes of John's assurance as to the veracity of his gospel (21:24), "The pronoun 'we' points to others who helped develop this profoundly theological gospel," despite the denial of these "others" by

the Douay-Rheims version, proven simply by John's same use of the pronoun "we" in the first chapter (v.14,16) to refer to himself and the Christian community. And the idea that the gospel is somehow "developed" rather than inspired *witness*, as John himself clearly states, cuts to the heart of the blindness of our scholars.

And Christ's words to the Pharisees become relevant again, albeit ironically: "You search the Scriptures, because in them you think that you have life everlasting. And it is they that bear witness to me, yet you are not willing to come to me that you may have life" (Jn.5:39-40). Our scholars' blindness to the Lord's presence in Scripture and before their eyes is the same, though today one wonders if there is any faith that life everlasting is anywhere. And how appropriate the Lord's chastisement: "How can you believe who receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that is from the only God?" (Jn.5:44). And as He says, "But I know you have not the love of God in you" (Jn.5:42). So how can they be expected to see...?

Jesus stands before us in His Word. It is sufficient guide for us to find Him, if we read it in His Spirit. The Lord guides through His Church, despite its imperfections, even the selection of texts we find at Mass; for His desire is that we know Him well. Let us see what we have before us: this is true science.

So I set forth in the Spirit on this day of Pentecost by His power and grace to shed light on our daily bread.

Amen, Lord Jesus, make yourself known.
In the Father make your home here
in these rooms.
I love you, my Lord and my God.

L. Ash Wed.

1. First Five Weeks

Ash Wednesday

(Jl.2:12-18; Ps.51:3-6,12-14,17; 2Cor.5:20-6:2; Mt.6:1-6,16-18)

“Even now, says the Lord,
return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning.”

“We implore you, in Christ’s name: be reconciled to God!” Paul exclaims; and the people of God today raise a cry, rending their hearts, begging His forgiveness... turning from their sins to find His healing grace.

The trumpet is blown in Zion; the people are gathered as one. Now “let the bridegroom quit his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.” For now is the time of mourning, now is the time of prayer... now is the time to cry with David, “Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.” For now as we “acknowledge [our] offense” we find how “gracious and merciful is He”; now “the joy of [His] salvation” returns to us as “a clean heart” He creates for us, as His Holy Spirit He instills in our souls. Yes, “Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!” And so let us cry out to our Lord: “Spare, O Lord, your people!”

The Lord will hear us, brothers and sisters; He will be quick to respond, as long as we are careful “not to receive the grace of God in vain.” As Jesus said to His disciples, so He says to us: “Be on guard against performing religious acts for people to see.” Only such vanity will prevent our finding the “recompense from our heavenly Father.” Yes, we must give alms. Yes, we must pray. Yes, we must fast. But listen to the Lord’s instruction to “keep your deeds of mercy secret,” to “pray to your Father

Lent

in private,” and to make sure “no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden.” For then indeed “your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you” for your sacrifice. But if your offering is one to impress the eyes of man, be sure the eyes of God do not look upon it and it shall find no blessing in His sight.

The time has come, the time of great mercy. As we call upon our God, “in the greatness of [His] compassion [He will] wipe out [our] offense.” In Jesus and in His sacrifice for our sin we might now “become the very holiness of God.” May we find now the Lord “stirred to concern for His land and [taking] pity on His people.” May we find His grace at work in our souls as we give ourselves to Him.

L. Thurs. after Ash Wed.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

(Dt.30:15-20; Ps.1:1-4,6,39:5; Lk.9:22-25)

“The Lord watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.”

In our first reading, Moses makes clear the choice we all must face: “I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse.” “By loving the Lord... heeding His voice, and holding fast to Him,” the Israelites will be blessed with “long life” in the Promised Land; they “will live and grow numerous” by “loving Him and walking in His ways.” This will be life for them. “If, however, [they] turn away [their] hearts and will not listen... [they] will certainly perish.” The promise to them will soon die if they walk “in the way of sinners.”

Life and death. The blessing and the curse. The just and the wicked. To the Israelites the promise that they would be “like a tree planted near running water” if they followed the commandments of the Lord referred quite literally, quite physically, to the blessing of long life and

Ash Wed.

enjoying the fruits of the earth. It showed itself in the numbers of people in the nation and the land they were given to occupy. When they were cursed, their kingdom was torn down and the land taken away from them. They became “like chaff which the wind drives away” when they were forced into exile from the lands of Judah and Israel.

What is the land we must so treasure today, brothers and sisters? What place are we called to preserve by following in the way of the Lord? For now he “who gains the whole world” will likely “destroy himself in the process.” Now our sights, our hopes, can no longer be set on the physical universe. Jesus has come. The Son of Man walks in our midst. And His presence, His flesh, makes the heavenly homeland our desire – it is this which is now our Promised Land. It is the number born into this kingdom which now causes our hearts to rejoice. It is this blessing that now comes to him “who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on His law day and night.”

And the Lord makes clear what “the way of the just” now entails. Our gospel tells us “Jesus said to all” – not just to His disciples, but to *all* who would find the blessing, would find life – “Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps.” And His steps include enduring “many sufferings,” being “put to death” and then being “raised up on the third day.” Now it is death that leads to life. Now this world must be left behind. Now, though we love all – even our enemies – and everything upon it, we must leave the earth we have held so dear. The command is the same (to renounce all sin and love God), but now the prize is much greater, and so the way there much more narrow. But the Lord blesses our every step toward Him.

Lent

L. Fri. after Ash Wed.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

(Is.58:1-9; Ps.51:3-6,18-19; Mt.9:14-15)

“Would that today you might fast
so as to make your voice heard on high!”

Brothers and sisters, in this day of fasting and penance, first we must “acknowledge [our] offense” as David in our psalm. We must cry out to our God: “Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.” This is our leaven of truth. “A contrite spirit, a heart contrite and humbled” the Lord cannot resist. It is this heart the Lord answers; it is prayer of this soul He hears – to this “cry for help... He will say: Here I am!”

“When the day comes that the groom is taken away, then they will fast.” We “go in mourning” when Jesus is no longer in our midst. What does this then say of our fast? For though the Lord may be with us always in the power of the Spirit, yet He is physically taken from us now till the end of time. Our fast must therefore be a permanent condition all the while we walk this earth. And so true is this if we understand the Lord’s definition of a fast as revealed in our first reading from Isaiah: “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly... sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked... and not turning your back on your own.” And what sense it makes that this be our fast now that Jesus is gone, for are we not His children here, called to carry out His mission in this world? Are not these the very things He instructs us to do in His stead for the least of His brothers who suffer now? On this earth here at the end of the age we should be engaged in fasting always.

And if we pray with a sincere heart, and if we do the will of the Lord in all things, what promise He makes to us: “Your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your

Ash Wed.

wound shall quickly be healed... The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.” All we ask shall be given us; all we seek we shall find in Him. And so, what shall our fasting be for us but pure joy, even as we become one with the Lord our God?

A blessed call is upon us now, one which makes our voices known to Him. Let us “remove from [our] midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech.” Let us denounce any “quarreling and fighting” that keeps us from Him, and see that His will is done in our lives. Then indeed He shall hear us; then by this death to sin we shall come to the glory of our God.

L. Sat. after Ash Wed.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

(Is.58:9-14; Ps.86:1-6,11; Lk.5:27-32)

“‘Repairer of the breach,’ they shall call you,
‘Restorer of ruined homesteads.’”

“Levi gave a great reception for Jesus in his house,” but it is Jesus who invites him, and all sinners, “to a change of heart” and to join Him in the home He makes for us all in heaven. As Levi (or Matthew) has done, so must we all: we must leave our “customs post,” that which roots us to this world – we must stand up and follow Him.

“You, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.” David makes his prayer in our psalm, coming to the Lord as one “afflicted and poor,” begging the Lord’s pity upon his soul. And there is confidence that his cry is answered, that his soul is gladdened; for the promise has been made through Isaiah that “He will renew [our] strength,” that we “shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails.” All that He has broken down in His anger against us and against our sins shall be raised up again: “The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations

Lent

from ages past you shall raise up.” As we turn to Him and “call the sabbath a delight... not following [our] ways, seeking [our] own interests, or speaking with malice,” we shall indeed “delight in the Lord” and in His inheritance; He shall indeed “nourish [us] with the heritage of Jacob” – the food He gives us will far surpass the bread upon the table at Levi’s banquet. For it is upon His own Body we shall feed, and so find ourselves renewed in spirit and strengthened for the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord comes to invite all “sick people” to His healing grace. All who turn from their sins shall be acceptable to Him. And in His House they shall find a place, and be nourished well. “Even on the parched land” they shall find the water of life, for His grace extends to all places and all peoples. And with the bread we bestow on the hungry we ourselves shall be fed, for by this labor we shall unite with Him. “The mouth of the Lord has spoken.” Let us find the mercy His words desire for us.

Week 1

L. 1. Sun. (A)

First Week

Sunday (A)

(Gn.2:7-9,3:1-7; Ps.51:3-6,12-14,17; Rm.5:12-19; Mt.4:1-11)

“Just as through the disobedience of the one man
the many were made sinners,
so, through the obedience of the one,
the many will be made righteous.”

And what obedience Jesus shows in His temptations. For He was weakened, “He was hungry” after His forty-day fast in the desert, and the devil came at Him with all his power. But He does not falter as did the first man; He remembers the Word of God and His command. And by His faithfulness the sin of Adam is washed clean.

See how the Lord atones for our sins; see how directly His temptations parallel those presented to Eve. As she is shown the goodness of the food before her, that it is “pleasing to the eyes,” so the devil tempts Jesus with bread that will sustain His life. As Eve ventures to take the food despite the command of God, listening to the serpent’s words: “You certainly will not die!” so Satan would lead Jesus to cast His weakened body down from the parapet of the temple, with the encouragement that the angels will protect Him. And as Eve is seduced by the devil’s promise, “You will be like gods,” so he tries the same promise of power over “all the kingdoms of the world” with Jesus. In the first two temptations Jesus struggles as He will later under the weight of the cross, sweating and bleeding under the devil’s test; but in the third, perhaps with understanding that the end of the temptations is at hand, He now exclaims, “Get away, Satan!” apparently revived – and His words are a most cutting blow to the prince of darkness: “The Lord, your God, shall you worship and Him alone shall you serve”;

Lent

for it is the great sin of Satan to presume to be as the Almighty God.

And so the prayer of David, found so poignantly in our psalm: “Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense,” is answered. And so the sin that has been “before [us] always,” since Adam fell in the garden, is now to be cleansed from our souls. For now the angels do come to minister to Him; and now He begins the ministry that leads directly to the cross and the redemption of mankind in His sacrifice. Now the die is cast for the salvation of our race. Soon the devil will hold no dominion.

L. 1. Sun. (B)

Sunday (B)

(Gn.9:8-15; Ps.25:4-9; 1Pt.3:18-22; Mk.1:12-15)

“I set my bow in the clouds
to serve as a sign of the covenant
between me and the earth.”

In times past God made a covenant with Noah and his sons once they had come from the ark “that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings,” that they and those who would descend from them, indeed all races of men, should experience such devastation no more. And the sign of the rainbow He has given “for all ages to come,” that His covenant shall not be forgotten.

This promise is a reassuring one, even if not by water but by fire we know this earth shall yet be destroyed. But a greater promise than this certainly we have, one for which this covenant is but a shadow. For now we have “Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.” Through His resurrection from the dead He now shines in the firmament more brightly than any rainbow,

Week 1

and indeed in Him *all* races of men meet again and find their hope, not only that they shall not be destroyed from the earth, but that they shall know everlasting salvation in heaven. Even “the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient when God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark,” have this word preached to them.

“The kingdom of God is at hand.” Yes, the salvation of the Lord has been set firmly in our hearts, even as the rainbow God set in the heavens. He has remembered His “love” and “compassion” which “are from of old” and in His “goodness” has fulfilled them in His only Son. Though Jesus has had to suffer death for our sakes, yet death is remembered no more as we gaze upon His resurrected form – as the bow after the rain, so does His glory shine after the death of this flesh. And though the flood “prefigured Baptism,” yet Baptism in the name of the Lord and into His death and resurrection is so much more, for “it is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience,” with which we are blessed now.

And so, brothers and sisters, let us find the “life in the Spirit” to which our Savior, come from the desert of our sin, now leads us. Let us fix our eyes upon His resurrection glory, even as we experience the death of the body.

L. 1. Sun. (C)

Sunday (C)

(Dt.26:4-10; Ps.91:1-2,10-15; Rom.10:8-13; Lk.4:1-13)

“To His angels He has given command about you,
that they guard you in all your ways.”

Can there be any doubt that the Lord God will bear Jesus up through His temptations in the desert, that He “will deliver Him and glorify Him”? For if “everyone

Lent

who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,” will the Father leave His Son “in distress”? If He has rescued David from “the lion and the dragon,” will He not also “set [Jesus] on high,” apart from any danger? If the Israelites say: “We cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and He heard our cry” – and so delivered them from the “affliction” and “toil” and “oppression” of Egyptian slavery – will the deliverance of the Holy One from Satan’s clutches be long in coming? Indeed the angels watch over Him, for His name is joined to that of the Father.

And indeed it is His name we now call upon in our need. As Paul tells us, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” And so He who has been preserved from the devil’s temptation now becomes the source of our own salvation – we find ourselves now protected as He, blessed by our faith in the Lord of all.

I notice again how the temptations present in our gospel are indicated, and answered, in our first reading and psalm. Of course, the devil himself attempts to use our quote from Psalm 91 to bring the Lord to ruin – showing how Scripture can indeed be twisted to perverse ends – foolishly failing to see that the quote would prove ultimately true. And the Israelites’ bringing their tithe to God, saying, “I have now brought you the firstfruits of the products of the soil which you, O Lord, have given me,” reveals the sacrifice that verifies that “one does not live by bread alone”; while Moses’ instruction that they then “bow down in [God’s] presence” confirms that “Him alone shall [we] serve.”

O devil, all your temptations will be in vain; can you not see the fruitlessness of your acts? You cannot harm Him who holds your life in His hands, and so why do you not turn and, as the faithful angels, learn to love and serve

Week 1

the Holy One? Brothers and sisters, it is too late for this “viper” to come to truth, but not for any man who will confess that Jesus is the Christ. So let us preach to the ends of the earth by the power of deliverance from sin won by our Lord that “*No one who believes in Him will be put to shame.*” O that all souls would be saved!

L. 1. Mon.

Monday

(Lv.19:1-2,11-18; Ps.19:8-10,15,Jn.6:63; Mt.25:31-46)

“As often as you did it for one of my least brothers,
you did it for me.”

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Such is the golden rule and the second of the greatest commandments, which is like unto the first: Love God. And the union of the two is made evident by Jesus in our gospel today; He makes clear that what we do to others we do to Him, and so to love God and neighbor become one and the same. So tied is the Lord to His creation by the incarnation of His Son.

And how blessed are all His commands to us, all of which are summed up in love, and all of which give us life. “Refreshing the soul... giving wisdom to the simple... rejoicing the heart... enlightening the eye... enduring forever” – such is the Word of God to the obedient soul. All He speaks is just and all He speaks is holy and brings life, for all He speaks is of the Spirit of love. And of that Spirit we must be, if we hope to attain to eternal life where He sits in glory.

“Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart find favor before you, O Lord, my rock and redeemer,” is David’s prayer after extolling the virtues of the law of the Lord in his psalm today. And such should be our prayer. For if our hearts are set upon Him, and if our mouths speak truth, we can be assured that our actions

Lent

will follow and we will please the Lord in all we do. For being of the Lord, we can only feed the hungry; seeking His will, we can only welcome Him and all His children into our lives. If we are founded upon this Rock, all will find in us the love of God.

For He is love, brothers and sisters, and all He asks of us is love. Love does “not steal.” Love does “not lie.” Love does “not defraud” or “curse the deaf” or “act dishonestly” in any way. In a word, if you are of love as He is love, “you shall not bear hatred for your brother in your heart.” And all are our brothers, even the least of these; the Lord has made this known. All are our neighbor and so none can “stand by idly when [his] neighbor’s life is at stake.” All are called by love to lend their hand, His hand, to others in need. For then we help Him.

Would we not help the Lord if we saw Him wanting? Is it not our desire to ease His pain? We have opportunity ever to do this in those around us. When we do, we fulfill His command and find life for our souls, for then we are holy as He.

L. 1. Tues.

Tuesday

(Is.55:10-11; Ps.34:4-7,16-19; Mt.6:7-15)

“Give us today our daily bread.”

Our daily bread comes from the mouth of God; it is His Word that nourishes us. His Word “water[s] the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats.” By His Word our spiritual lives are anointed with holiness; the breath of His mouth makes us whole, and so we become fruitful in His Name.

Yes, we are sharers in His Word; it is His Word the just speak in their time of need. “Crushed in spirit” before Him like holy seed, their cry comes to His ears and the rain He sends upon them saves them from all sin,

Week 1

“deliver[s] [them] from all fears.” Jesus, the Word made flesh, is true, and His words are true: “Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him”; and so the Father is quick to hear when we enter into His Word and call upon His Name in all humility. It is this humility which makes us fertile earth, this trust in His will that lifts our faces toward His light, that we “may not blush with shame.” “Look to Him that you may be radiant with joy,” O sinner. “Glorify the Lord” and “extol His name,” for with you He shares His Spirit; in you He plants the Word that grows to eternal life.

Father in heaven, you alone are holy, and your Name is life to us. Let “your kingdom come,” let “your will be done,” for apart from you we wither and die. Make our earth your heaven; bring to us all the blessings you know we need to live ever in your light. Feed us with your bread, feed us with your Word – your Son is all the food we need. And for all “the wrong we have done,” as He has taught us, let us find our forgiveness by releasing from all bondage those who have done wrong to us, by loving our enemies. In the end we pray, O Lord, that temptation be taken from our path; though we treasure your chastising Hand, let us not falter anymore – “deliver us from the evil one” who lurks in this world seeking the ruin of our souls.

O Lord, our lives are in your hands. Our hearts are given life by you. In our prayer let us not imitate the vain words of the pagans, but let us join in the Spirit with your Son and become one in the Word with you. (Help me to remember your Name.)

(I witness here that however many times I speak the Lord’s Prayer, as however many times I attend Holy Mass, by the grace that comes through the Spirit, it is ever new and alive with the blessings that come from above. These words are a gift to us we must cherish in our souls.)

Lent

L. 1. Wed.

Wednesday

(Jon.3:1-10; Ps.51:3-4,12-13,18-19; Lk.11:29-32)

“At the preaching of Jonah they reformed.”

Let us learn from the people of Nineveh, who heeded the message of repentance given Jonah. At Jonah’s cry they “believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.” Even the king “laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes” in hopes of averting the destruction he knew God held in hand for his wayward city. He decrees that “every man shall turn from his evil way” and “call loudly to God.” Such utter repentance! Such turning from sin! And this from a pagan king and a pagan nation.

If Nineveh has so believed in God, if it has so recognized its sin before Him and turned so dramatically back to Him, pleading for His mercy, what should we not do, brothers and sisters, in this time of Lent set aside for the cleansing of *our* sins, we who have Jesus’ preaching now ringing in our ears and calling to our hearts? Indeed, we must again and continually cry out with David to God for His mercy to come upon us. Ever with “a contrite and humbled heart” we must sit before Him recognizing our sin. For always our sin is with us, however much we might be ignorant of our guilt as we live our lives in vain. “Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me,” must be our eternal plea, for we are in continual danger of going away from Him.

Let us not be afraid to humble ourselves before God and man. Let us seek nothing else but the wisdom of Christ, the call of the cross to our souls. In humility, in sackcloth and ashes, let us prostrate ourselves before the true King who will come at the judgment to discern the worth of all souls. Perhaps He will have mercy. Perhaps He will “withhold His blazing wrath.” Perhaps the

Week 1

punishment we deserve He may avert and “we shall not perish.” Upon the soul He finds His cross inscribed, He shall take pity, my friends.

O Lord, we have sinned and done what is evil in your sight. In your infinite mercy look upon our broken hearts, and help us to reform our lives. For you alone are God.

L. 1. Thurs.

Thursday

(Est.C:12,14-16,23-25; Ps.138:1-3,7-8; Mt.7:7-12)

“My Lord, our King, you alone are God.
Help me, who am alone and have no help but you.”

In our gospel we have today a few of our Lord’s most famous words: “Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.” Jesus encourages us to faithfulness in prayer, assuring all that our “heavenly Father [will] give good things to anyone who asks Him.” How beautiful are His words, and how true.

And how well Queen Esther illustrates the faithful prayer of one who has “recourse to the Lord.” She comes to the Lord in all humility, as an obedient child before her father, and opens her heart to God with a sincere plea for her fellow Jews, threatened with extinction by the enemy. She says of her forefathers, proclaiming herself a daughter of Abraham, “You fulfilled all your promises to them,” and comes now seeking the same answer from the “King of gods and Ruler of every power.” Such prayer for salvation before the God she recognizes “know[s] all things” cannot but be answered by the loving Father. He will give her the food she desires.

In our psalm we hear David’s song of thanksgiving for the prayers the Lord has been faithful in answering for him: “I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth,” thus proving

Lent

the truth of Jesus' exhortation to His disciples, and indicating that Esther will also find answer to her prayer – and so, that we all should have assurance of God's loving desire to heed all *our* sincere pleas. David, too, acknowledges the greatness of God: "You have made great above all things your name and your promise," and so comes to the place where the "kindness and [the] truth" of the Lord will be known to him. And his faith in the Lord's promise to be with him and hear him lasts for perpetuity: "The Lord will complete what He has done for me."

Praise the Lord, who answers all prayers. Praise the loving God who knows all things. It is in His heart to feed us with the best of wheat, and this He does each day for those who "worship at [His] holy temple and give thanks to [His] name." "Forsake not the work of your hands," dear Lord. Be with us always to hear our humble prayers, that we might witness always your loving faithfulness to all who call upon you in truth.

L. 1. Fri.

Friday

(Ez.18:21-28; Ps.130:1-8; Mt.5:20-26)

"Settle with your opponent
while on your way to court with him."

We are all on our way to court, brothers and sisters. The judgment of the Lord awaits us all on the Last Day, and the Last Day is upon us here at the end of the age. There is no time to lose; we must be "reconciled with [our] brother"; we must turn from sin today and find the Lord's grace. "With the Lord is kindness and plenteous redemption; and He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities" – but "out of the depths" we must cry to Him "in supplication" to find His blessed forgiveness; and from sinful paths we must turn our feet to know His salvation.

Week 1

“If a wicked man, turning from the wickedness he has committed, does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life.” It is a great promise that comes to us through the prophet Ezekiel, that none of our crimes shall be remembered by God when we return to Him. For the Lord does not “derive any pleasure from the death of the wicked,” He “rather rejoice[s] when he turns from his evil way that he may live”; for the Lord wishes life for us all, wishes Himself, who is Life, for every soul, and gives it freely, and quite naturally, when we follow His ways.

It is really rather simple: as when a wicked man turns to good things he is no longer wicked but good and so lives in the Lord, so “when a virtuous man turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.” Evil brings death, and righteousness and justice (goodness) bring life. The Lord desires life for us all and so He calls us to repentance, to repentance from even what might seem to our minds the smallest of sins – for so greatly does He wish life for us. And clearly does He know that which we cannot see, that death holds sway over us by every sin on our soul.

Let us avoid the fires of hell and the pains of purgatory, brothers and sisters. Let us call out to the Lord this day and find His “plenteous redemption” even as we turn from our sins. And there shall be no prison into which we are thrown, as we forgive one another, and the Lord forgives us, our sins.

L. 1. Sat.

Saturday

(Dt.26:16-19; Ps.119:1-2,4-5,7-8; Mt.5:43-48)

“You will be a people sacred to the Lord, your God.”

The promise made to the Israelites through Moses is also a command, and is fulfilled in the command of Jesus.

Lent

In our first reading Moses tells the people the Lord will raise them “high in praise and renown and glory above all other nations,” but makes it clear that this shall be so only as long as they “walk in His ways and observe His statutes, commandments, and decrees” – only if they “hearken to His voice.” For His law is as food to the body and light to the mind and must be observed carefully, “with all [our] heart and with all [our] soul,” to maintain the presence of God in our lives. If “He is to be [our] God,” we must do as He commands.

Thus our psalmist sings of the happiness of those “who observe His decrees, who seek Him with all their heart.” Thus does he cry out in longing, “Oh, that I might be firm in the ways of keeping your statutes!” for he knows in them is life. To “walk in the way of the Lord” is his joy.

And that joy is made complete, our life is made whole, by the new command of love Jesus imparts to our soul. The Lord fulfills the Law of Moses, which gave light to the people, by commanding us not to love only our “countryman” but all: “Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.” Here is His challenge for us to “prove that [we] are sons of our heavenly Father,” to love as He loves, to know the greatness of His glory, therefore, in our very lives. If the psalmist cried out in such joy at the blessing found in following the Law of Moses, what indescribable joy is ours when we follow Jesus’ words. What greater call can we have than to “be made perfect as [our] heavenly Father is perfect”? What greater merit and blessing could there be? None. For He is Life itself, and here we are called to live with Him.

“His sun rises on the bad and the good, He rains on the just and the unjust.” Nothing dims God’s holy light or stems the blessings He showers upon all. In absolute light, in absolute love, the Father dwells, in the heavenly kingdom; and if we can love as He loves, as Jesus has

Week 1

loved, we shall know such blessing. Love even those who hate you and you will be as the Father, who knows only love, and you will become sacred to Him – you will be saints in His kingdom.

Lent

L. 2. Sun. (A)

Second Week

Sunday (A)

(Gn.12:1-4a; Ps.33:4-5,18-20,22; 2Tm.1:8b-10; Mt.17:1-9)

“Rise, and do not be afraid.”

Here in the midst of the darkness we drink in during this Lenten Season comes a light shining to assure our hearts of the promise that is ours. The Lord’s Transfiguration is presented to us this day to lead us through all the tribulations of the cross to the resurrection, which is our holy goal.

“Beloved: Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God,” Paul says to his special child Timothy, and so the Lord speaks to us all, reminding us that “He saved us and called us to a holy life.” It is “up a high mountain by themselves” Jesus leads His principal disciples Peter, James, and John, to reveal to them the glory to which they are called – thus signifying the cross we must all carry along the rough terrain of this world to reach our place in heaven. In seeing that “His face

shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light” and then hearing the voice of the Father overshadowing them, they are overawed... but the hand of the Lord touches them, and strengthens them for the road ahead.

Our call is like that of Abraham, the father of all those of faith: “Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.” We all must leave behind the security this world holds and go according to God’s word, to travel in a land foreign to our souls. But His assurance is with us, His blessing is upon us, and so the darkness of the night should not make us afraid. For “the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope for His kindness, to deliver

Week 2

them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.” And so, however difficult the walk, however steep the climb, our hearts should never waver; for we have always at our side “our Savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

And so, brothers and sisters, as we travel through the heart of the sacrifice this Lenten time invites us to share, let it be that “our soul waits for the Lord, who is our help and our shield,” and let our prayer be as David’s: “May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, who have put our hope in you.” For Jesus is before us to lead us to our home.

L. 2. Sun. (B)

Sunday (B)

(Gn.22:1-2,9-13,15-18; Ps.116:10,15-19; Rom.8:31-34; Mk.9:2-10)

“You shall offer him up as a holocaust
on a height that I will point out to you.”

“Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love,” the Lord instructs Abraham, calling him to sacrifice even as an animal his beloved child, upon whom God’s promise rests. To a mountain he is led, with his son carrying wood in tow.

And arriving at the place God had told him to go, “Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it... and took the knife to slaughter his son.” The angel comes to stay his hand, but Abraham is prepared to do as the Lord commands.

The Lord prevents Abraham from making this sacrifice because it is not *his* son who is to die; only the Lord’s Beloved could be offered as such a holocaust – only His Son is called upon to die. “Christ Jesus it is who died,” no one else, for only His death brings life.

And on Mount Tabor today we see the life that will come by the Lord’s sacrifice; already we glimpse the rays

Lent

of heaven. Jesus is as engulfed in flames, holy fire of the most blessed holocaust; and – like the three young men in the furnace, like the bush before Moses on Mt. Horeb – by these flames He is not burned: by these flames His purity is made to shine.

How good indeed it is for these apostles to behold this blessed vision! In it we all find hope that the death of Christ is not for naught, and neither shall our own death be. For all who die in Christ, die as Christ, a death that brings only eternal life. And so, comprehending here the majesty to which we are called, all disciples of Jesus, all children of the God of Life, are strengthened for all trial.

God “did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all,” not because He loved Him not, but because He loves us all. And now “will He not also give us everything along with Him?” Will He now seek to condemn those whom He has justified at such a massive cost?

“It is God who acquits us,” brothers and sisters, by the death of His Son. And now “precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of [all] His faithful ones”; do not be afraid to serve the Lord. For by your sacrifice, to a great height He will draw you, even as He has His Son, who “is at the right hand of God” this day. With Abraham, He “will bless you abundantly.”

L. 2. Sun. (C)

Sunday (C)

(Gn.15:5-12,17-18; Ps.27:1,7-9,13-14; Phil.3:17-4:1; Lk.9:28-36)

“A cloud came and cast a shadow over them,
and they became frightened when they entered the cloud.”

As darkness thus covered the three apostles, so “a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him.” Both find themselves surrounded by darkness and filled with fear. In just this way the Lord

Week 2

brings His revelations. For as the Lord is about to pronounce beyond doubt that Jesus is the Messiah, so He is about to send “a flaming torch” to pass between Abram’s offerings and so confirm his taking possession of the Promised Land. The Lord must act in such manner to cleanse all foolishness from our souls, that we might hear His most pure Word.

But light comes out of the darkness: indeed, “the Lord is [our] light and [our] salvation” – He Himself is not darkness. And so as the fire of the torch pierces the dark night upon Abram’s mind, so the chief apostles are privileged to see Jesus’ glory, to witness in fullness the Light the Son of God is. And the Lord God leaves no doubt with them that it is of Jesus He says, “This is my chosen Son,” for though the greatest men of Jewish history had also “appeared in glory” with Jesus, now He is “found alone” – and the apostles are left speechless.

It must pass to the marrow of our bones, the Truth of Christ’s salvation. If in any way superficial or “occupied with earthly things” is our vision, Him we have not known. He alone stands as our “life’s refuge”; in Him alone do we find God’s presence – Him alone should our “glance” seek. But as we pray, “Hide not your face from me,” we should realize how profound is the prayer we make. For the Lord indeed “will change our lowly body to conform with His glorified body” when He appears at the end of the age, but consider for a moment what it will be like to have that power of refinement upon ourselves. Very much like the darkness which envelops the apostles and Abram today; very much like the dark night of the soul of which our great saints speak. Are you prepared to have the Lord separate soul from spirit with His sword of Truth? Do you know this piercing, fiery process even now? Then even in this world you shall begin to behold His face, and find yourself ready on that Day to be taken from earthly to heavenly tents.

Lent

L. 2. Mon.

Monday

(Dn.9:4-10; Ps.79:8-9,11,13,103:10; Lk.6:36-38)

“Deliver us and pardon our sins for your name’s sake.”

It is a cry for forgiveness our psalmist makes to our compassionate God. “Remember not against us the iniquities of the past,” he begs, seeking release from sin’s prison for himself and his people. And Daniel does the same; acknowledging with full throat the sins of Judah and all Israel, he seeks the merciful hand of the Lord upon the people, interceding in their stead. Though he himself is an upright man, he cries out, “We have sinned, been wicked and done evil,” praying thus for the rebellious nation which has been scattered to “all countries” for their failure to heed the command of the Lord.

Well do our Old Testament figures embody Jesus’ teaching in our gospel, summed up simply: “Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate.” For they “do not judge” or “condemn” those individuals primarily responsible for the apostasy and so the destruction of the kingdom and the covenant, but rather seek earnestly to heal the rift that has come by giving generously of themselves and their love for God and others, in Christlike fashion standing in the breach. And so they earn the titles of prophet and psalmist of God; and so they foreshadow the heavenly compassion Jesus calls all His followers to pour forth in His name. (And so we can be assured their compassion has been “measured back” to them by the Lord.)

Jesus on the cross dies for the sins of all people, and this is His central call to all our souls: to imitate Him is our blessed goal. For insofar as we die for God and others, insofar as we lay down our lives in His truth, thus far we shall find His “compassion quickly come to us” and so live in the heavenly glory which is now His place. To

Week 2

us all He calls this day to pardon and forgive, for in doing so we shall find the reconciliation of the Lord even with our enemies, and secure for ourselves a room in His heavenly home.

He who knew no sin was made sin for our sake. He has humbled Himself to carry the sins of the nation... Let us, brothers and sisters, die with Christ on the cross, that all sin might be taken away in His Name.

L. 2. Tues.

Tuesday

(Is.1:10,16-20; Ps.50:8-9,16-17,21,23; Mt.23:1-12)

“To him that goes the right way
I will show the salvation of God.”

“Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good.” For it is only following in the way of the Lord we shall be saved; for mere words, vain pretense, the Lord has no patience.

Indeed it is so, what Isaiah proclaims: “Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow.” Forgiveness is offered forth generously by the Lord to the nation that goes astray. But we must be “willing, and obey” the word “the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” If we “hate discipline and cast [His] words behind” our backs, if we but “recite [His] statutes” as the Pharisees whose “works are performed to be seen,” whose mouths profess the covenant but whose deeds are far from Him, how is it we shall find salvation? For the Lord is not blind and deaf as we to the heart of man; and unlike our own, His word is true, and His command must be followed – we must serve Him and our neighbor. We must humble ourselves in His sight if we hope to be exalted to His kingdom.

“Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow.” Over and over we hear from the mouth of the prophet and the psalmist and the

Lent

Son Himself – the Lord has compassion on the poor and lowly, and we must *do* as He calls... we must be His arms and legs in this world. Unlike the Pharisees who “will not lift a finger” to carry even the lightest burden, whose “deeds are few,” we must take up the full weight of the cross. It is not “places of honor” and “marks of respect in public” for which we hunger; but when we teach and as we serve, our hearts must be set on the salvation of souls, which can only be accomplished by living the way of the Messiah, by following His example.

What has Jesus not done for us? What teaching has He left lacking flesh and blood? And so, rightly is He called “Rabbi”; and so, truly is He the only Son of the one Father in heaven. Brothers and sisters, we must go the way He leads – we must follow the humble path to the kingdom. In this our sins shall become “white as wool,” washed in the blood of the Lamb.

L. 2. Wed.

Wednesday

(Jer.18:18-20; Ps.31:5-6,14-17; Mt.20:17-28)

“Can you drink of the cup I am to drink of?”

Do you know what He asks, brothers and sisters? And do you know where it leads?

In our gospel today, Jesus is very deliberate in His instruction to His apostles. As He starts out “to go up to Jerusalem,” where the chief priests and scribes “will condemn Him to death” and the Romans crucify Him, He takes “the Twelve aside on the road” to speak clearly to them of the fate which awaits Him. (So objective are His words that He refers to Himself in the third person.) Of course, the apostles are yet far from understanding His message, as shown by their soon dissembling into jealous indignation regarding the question of the power and importance of each. And the Lord must teach them again

Week 2

that He has come “to give His own life as a ransom for many”; He “has come, not to be served by others, but to serve,” and that those who “aspire to [the] greatness” that is His must necessarily “serve the needs of all.”

We know that Peter is the first among equals “for whom it has been reserved by [the] Father,” as the Lord has indicated earlier, and not James or John – though both of these shall have prominent place in drinking of the cup of Christ: James as the first apostle martyred and John, the beloved, whose martyrdom shall be white, coming in the endurance of a long life – but all of us who seek to follow Jesus indeed share in the selfsame cross, and so shall receive of the selfsame blessings of Him who is raised up “on the third day.” All are called to drink of the cup of suffering and service in Jesus’ stead. We must be clear on this essential point of faith.

And does not Jeremiah’s persecution at the hands of the citizens of Jerusalem show that the cross of Christ extends even to the time before He had come in the flesh? Do not the words spoken against the prophet: “Let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word,” echo exactly the plottings of the Pharisees against Jesus, whom they repeatedly sought to entrap? And all this though He does “speak in their behalf, to turn away [the Father’s] wrath from them.” And David in our psalm chants the same refrain: “They consult together against me, plotting to take my life.”

Brothers and sisters, as it was for David and Jeremiah and Jesus, following in the ways of the Lord will bring us persecution. You may well ask, “Must good be repaid with evil?” but the Lord will answer, “Let it be for now.” For “from the clutches of [our] enemies and [our] persecutors” He rescues those who trust in Him. Take heart that the humbled shall be exalted as you drink deeply of His cup.

Lent

L. 2. Thurs.

Thursday

(Jer.17:5-10; Ps.1:1-4,6,40:5; Lk.16:19-31)

“He is like a tree planted beside the waters,
that stretches out its roots to the stream.”

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.” For he shall be like the tree “that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade.” He shall never be “like a barren bush in the desert” or “like chaff which the wind drives away.” Never shall he know the “place of torment,” for “the heat when it comes” shall do him no harm. This man “follows not the counsel of the wicked nor walks in the way of sinners,” but rather “meditates on [God’s] law day and night.” His faith and his hope are the roots that stretch out to the living water of the living God who nourishes all by His Word and in His flesh.

Brothers and sisters, we must never “trust in human beings” as do the Pharisees, or be as the rich man who “seeks his strength in flesh,” “dressed in purple and linen and feast[ing] splendidly every day.” This earth itself holds not our food. Notice that it is to the Pharisees Jesus addresses His parable in our gospel today. How closely the rich man parallels these leaders of the people. The bounty of God’s wisdom is bestowed upon them, but they use it to feed their bellies rather than to shepherd those in need. They claim Abraham as their father and the Law of Moses as their guide, but they neither have the faith that makes Abraham the father of all, nor do they follow the instructions Moses conveys. Only in the flesh are they Abraham’s sons; and though they see him from the hell to which they come, they cannot touch him, they cannot reach past him to the Father in heaven, who gives Abraham his blessing. Dwelling but in their “father’s house” as the rich man who gorged himself on the

Week 2

pleasures of the flesh, they come not to the Father's House on high, for their roots penetrate not to the living water that is found in faith, and now Lazarus cannot even "dip the tip of his finger in water to refresh [their] tongue." Dead as the stone upon which the commandments were written do they become.

Notice, too, brothers and sisters, the connection between thoughts and actions, between faith and works, between the word and the flesh in our first reading, and present throughout Scripture: "I, the Lord, alone probe the mind and test the heart, to reward everyone according to his ways, according to the merit of his deeds." Only the Lord, who is Himself the living water, knows if His Word of life dwells in a man, and that faithful spirit is reflected directly in the just man's deeds – for by these the Lord judges. And Jesus is the just man; He is the Word made flesh in whom the Spirit dwells, in whom all find life. He is the undying tree, one with the Father, whom all must imitate. His words are living water; His flesh is food we eat: He alone is perfect in word and deed, for in Him spirit and flesh meet. Let our hearts be set on Him, and we, too, shall be blessed; and we shall know that He is risen from the dead.

L. 2. Fri.

Friday

(Gn.37:3-4,12-13,17-28; Ps.105:5,16-21; Mt.21:33-43,45-46)

"They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites
for twenty pieces of silver."

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the keystone of the structure." Hear what Scripture says. As he who was "sold as a slave" by his brothers became "lord of [the king's] house and ruler of all his possessions," so He whom the elders of the people could call "our brother, our own flesh," whom they "seized... dragged... outside

Lent

the vineyard, and killed,” has become the very foundation of the New Jerusalem.

How parallel are our first reading and gospel today. Jacob, Israel, sends the son he loves best, he who is “the child of his old age,” to the brothers who are tending their father’s flock, to bring them food to nourish them in their labor. The Father in heaven sends Jesus, His beloved Son – who is Child of His old age both in His existing with Him before time and in His coming here at the end of the age to His brothers – to those to whom He has entrusted the care of His vineyard, through whom He feeds all the people, with the greatest of nourishment to sustain them unto heaven itself. For their jealousy over the favor granted their brother, Israel’s sons strip Joseph of his long and princely tunic and cast him into a cistern “which was empty and dry” as their souls. Out of the same jealousy and in the desire for His inheritance, the chief priests and Pharisees will soon arrest the Lord and see that He is stripped and nailed to a cross.

And, brothers and sisters, the outcome of each story shall be the same. As his brothers must come on their knees to their brother to find grain to keep themselves from dying of famine on the parched earth once Joseph has taken his place as ruler of the king’s possessions in Egypt, so the elders of the people and all of us who bear responsibility for the death of Christ by our continual sins against Him shall have to come on our knees before Him who sits on the throne of heaven robed in glory, to find nourishment for our journey here in His sacred Body and Blood, and to find a place at table in the kingdom to come.

There is much to be pondered in the rejection of Jesus, as is so with the betrayal of Joseph. It is not only the Pharisees – who answer so well the Lord’s question regarding the fate of the tenant farmers, yet have not the faith to match the words God puts on their lips – who must look inside themselves and recognize their anger and

Week 2

jealousy and greed. The Lord invites each of his brothers to examine his conscience this day, in this time. In particular, are we showing ourselves to be the nation the Lord has given the kingdom of God? Do we “yield a rich harvest” for Him who was sold for thirty pieces of silver? Or have our souls gone bankrupt? May from us the Lord “obtain His share of the grapes.”

L. 2. Sat.

Saturday

(Mic.7:14-15,18-20; Ps.103:1-4,8-12; Lk.15:1-3,11-32)

“While he was still a long way off,
his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved.”

“He ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.” Amen. Such is the forgiveness of the Lord, that even while we are far from Him, yet while we are sinners, He sees our hearts turn to Him and welcomes us into His embrace.

We have all “sinned against God,” brothers and sisters. We are all as the Prodigal Son who has “squandered his money on dissolute living.” But O the forgiveness of our God, who “with kindness and compassion” “redeems [our] life from destruction,” who in “pardon[ing] all [our] iniquities” raises us from the death of sin to sit with Him in heaven. Does not the father in our parable say as much of the sinner? “This son of mine was dead and has come back to life.” Is it not so that when we were still sinners Jesus died for us, to raise us with Himself to new life?

“Who is there like you, the God who removes guilt and pardons sin for the remnant of His inheritance?” the prophet Micah asks in our first reading, wondering at the infinite grace of our Father. “As the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is His kindness toward those who fear Him,” sings David in our psalm. And so,

Lent

how joyous we should be, how our souls should “bless the Lord... and forget not all His benefits.” For indeed, “not according to our sins does He deal with us, nor does He requite us according to our crimes.” Rather, even though we deserve damnation, even though the most we could hope for is to be treated as one of His hired hands, yet does He remember His love for us. Beyond all human reason, He graces us with “the finest robe” and calls us in to “eat and celebrate” at the heavenly banquet, where there shall be “music and dancing” to the Name of our God, where all the gifts of the Spirit poured forth through the blood of Christ are ours as we become one with the Father, as we return to Him “in good health.” Is there anything more remarkable?

And let us not sin as the elder brother. Let us not begrudge God, the loving Father, His infinite generosity to all His sons. Let us not presume to stand in judgment against those the Lord deigns to forgive, but share His forgiveness and His grace toward all. Then truly the father’s words to the elder son (which are a noticeably kind word to the Pharisees, whom this son represents) will be our own: “You are with me always, and everything I have is yours.” Let us know the truth of this, God’s will for all our souls, and accept the gracious forgiveness which brings us to it as we come “to [our] senses” and turn to Him with all our hearts this day. He is calling us home.

Week 3

L. 3. Sun. (A)

Third Week

Sunday (A)

(Ex.17:3-7; Ps.95:1-2,6-9; Rom.5:1-2,5-8; Jn.4:5-42)

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;
but whoever drinks the water I shall give
will never thirst.”

What is this “spring of water welling up to eternal life” but the Holy Spirit come upon us, the Truth of God in our midst through the blessed sacrifice of the Son for us “while we were still sinners.” Brothers and sisters, “the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us,” even as Jesus’ words of spirit and truth are poured into the ears of the Samaritan woman. Do we know His grace? Do we hear His voice and leave our water jar at the old well as we go to tell others about the Christ?

In our readings today is the juxtaposition of the physical and the spiritual, and the call to enter into the Spirit of God. In our first reading, the Israelites “in their thirst for water” while wandering in the desert cry out against God and Moses and long to return to their slavery in Egypt, that they might but be able to eat and drink. The Lord would teach them to depend on Him, to trust in the Spirit and His love, and He will provide for all their needs, as He does this day, but they are blinded to the Hand of God. “Though they had seen [His] works,” they continually tested Him, unable to find rest in Him, and for their hardness of heart virtually none shall themselves enter the Promised Land. And the source of their lack of faith is ever their bellies.

In our gospel twice we see the inability to understand the Spirit speaking because of the belly’s grumbling. The Samaritan woman confuses the life-giving water of which

Lent

Jesus speaks with the passing water she came to draw from Jacob's well: "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming to this well." And the disciples think someone else has brought the Lord something to eat when He says, "I have food to eat of which you do not know," at their urging Him to eat the food they have in hand. But as He speaks to the woman of the Holy Spirit, He speaks to them of our daily bread – "to do the will of the one who sent [us] and to finish His work." Indeed, as He awaits the return of the sinful woman with her Samaritan neighbors, He prepares them for the mission that must now go forth even to "foreigners." It is the Spirit of God He desires them to eat that they might be fortified for their call. And it is the Spirit found in the Body and Blood He has shed for our sakes of which we all must partake to slake our thirst and find the strength to do the work which leads us to the kingdom of God. His is a kingdom for all; and it lasts forever.

L. 3. Sun. (B)

Sunday (B)

(Ex.20:1-17; Ps.19:8-11; 1Cor.1:22-25; Jn.2:13-25)

"The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever."

Is it not fear of the Lord, Jesus would instill in the people as He makes "a whip out of cords" and drives those who buy and sell out of the temple? Is His great zeal not to purify His Father's House of all corruption? And will the Temple He will raise up not endure forever?

David tells us that "the law of the Lord is perfect," and it is so; and so our worship of the Lord should be perfect as well – it should match the perfection of the Lord and His Word. Thus does the Lord give us His commandments, to refine us in His light and make us like

Week 3

Himself. Thus should we rest on the sabbath day as He has done, and indeed do all things according to His way, having “no other gods besides” Him. He alone is worthy of our worship, and He alone is worthy of imitation. His words alone will enlighten our eye.

And how do we know this “wisdom of God” except by the blessed presence of His Son? And how do we know it most fully but in His crucifixion? Here is the wisdom of God upon the cross, calling us to what is far beyond us – beyond this world and our lusts. “Human nature” He knew quite well, assuming it in all but sin as He has, and so He knows it must be nailed to the cross if we are to gain redemption. And what wisdom is greater than that which effects salvation? To what greater place could we be led than the kingdom of heaven?

And “Christ crucified” reveals not only the wisdom of God but “the power of God” as well, for what makes the devils tremble more than our Savior on the cross? What forces them to realize the vanity of their efforts to destroy man than to see Him dead, and know that He shall live again? (And we with Him... and we with Him.) “The weakness of God is stronger than human strength,” and here God’s weakness comes to full power. And with absolute force it shall drive all evil from the world, and from our souls.

“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,” are the Lord’s prophetic words. The Temple of His Body once destroyed now is made to last forever, for it can never be destroyed again. Now that He is raised from the dead, death has no more dominion. Purified of all darkness and sin is the kingdom; and in awe of the Lord’s humble majesty we come there with open eyes and hearts on fire, to dwell with Him in eternal life.

Lent

L. 3. Sun. (C)

Sunday (C)

(Ex.3:1-8a,13-15; Ps.103:1-4,6-8,11; 1Cor.10:1-6,10-12; Lk.13:1-9)

“The Lord secures justice
and the rights of all the oppressed.”

Thus does the Lord God appear to Moses and call him to rescue the Israelites from the Egyptians. He has “witnessed the affliction of His people”; He has “heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers” and “know[s] well what they are suffering.” And so, by the hand of Moses, He will lead them to “a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Yes, brothers and sisters, the Lord “has made known His ways to Moses”; His “kindness and compassion” He has revealed to His people. The great I AM (YHWH), He who is and who will always be, has come and shown Himself to His servant on the “holy ground” of Mount Horeb. In a “bush [that] is not burned” though flaming with fire, He opens Moses' eyes to His presence. And He tells him His glorious NAME, by which He is “to be remembered through all generations” – that it is He who is Life. And, of course, the life He brings is one of mercy and healing.

Yet, though the Lord is certainly “merciful and gracious,” He is also just; thus does Paul remind us that though all the Israelites “were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” in their exodus from slavery, though all ate and drank from “the rock [that] was Christ... God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert.” So the blessings they had gained by the mercy of our God, they soon lost by their own disobedience. And so could we all lose the grace of Christ at work in our lives if we “desire evil things, as they did.” For God is merciful, but God is just, and will not have His kindness presumed upon.

Week 3

Thus does Jesus Himself also warn us, even as He warns the people who question Him this day that they are no better than those “whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices,” that we are not without guilt ourselves. Thus does He proclaim, “If you do not repent, you will all perish as they did,” as all sinners do. And thus does He warn us by parable that if we do not bear fruit in His name, we shall be cut down and thrown in the fire – for there is no wasted ground in the kingdom of God.

If you cry out to Him, He will hear you, for it is He who “redeems your life from destruction” and your salvation is His desire. But justice insists that if you turn back to your sin, you choose to remove yourself from His loving arms.

L. 3. Mon.

Monday

(2Kgs.5:1-15; Ps.42:2-3,43:3-4; Lk.4:24-30)

“There is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.”

“There is a prophet in Israel,” brothers and sisters, and this prophet is God. Jesus Christ has come, salvation from the Jews. Do you recognize Him? Will you accept Him?

It is only in “the waters of Israel” that we are made clean. As wonderful as may be the waters of our native land, it matters not, for it is these alone that are blessed; these alone will make our flesh again “like the flesh of a little child.” For a little child has come through these waters, has been baptized in this River, and it is His blood which baptizes us all and makes us clean as the flesh of God.

“Bring me to your holy mountain, to your dwelling place,” our souls should sing with our psalmist as they seek “the running waters” of “the living God” that alone will satisfy all our needs. O to “behold the face of God,” to “go in to the altar of God” in “gladness and joy”! How

Lent

we should search for His grace and His presence! Like Naaman, who came from a distant land upon the word of a servant girl, so should we obediently seek the grace that comes only from God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. He is our dwelling place, the Temple of God.

“No prophet gains acceptance in his native place,” Jesus proclaims to those of His hometown. And His prophecy is true. For though salvation is from the Jews and they are Jews who serve as its foundation stones, yet the Church shall be constituted greatly by those of other lands. The Jews who follow Him shall be greatly persecuted by their own, and the Word shall bear fruit to the ends of the world before the eyes of the Chosen shall be opened to the living water, the healing grace, in their midst.

Come in faith, brothers and sisters, to this holy mountain where the Lord does dwell, to find the cleansing of your sins. Through none else does salvation come; in no one else is the Word made known. The flesh of God is Jesus alone.

L. 3. Tues.

Tuesday

(Dn.3:25,34-43; Ps.25:4-9; Mt.18:21-35)

“With contrite heart and humble spirit let us be received.”

The Lord “guides the humble to justice, He teaches the humble His way,” and so it is the prayer of these He receives; upon them He showers His mercy. For His mercy is His justice and it is known by those who humbly share the same.

Azariah makes his prayer for mercy for his people Israel, who suffer the purgatorial fires of their exile from the Promised Land, even as he himself stands in the quite literal fire of the furnace of the king of Babylon for his

Week 3

faithfulness to the living God. He begs the Lord: “Do not let us be put to shame, but deal with us in your kindness and great mercy,” and as he comes humbly and with great faith interceding for others and not himself, and thus exhibiting the mercy he desires of the Lord, he is well protected from the flames by the angel of God. The Lord’s justice is known to him who “follow[s] [Him] with [his] whole heart.”

And Jesus makes quite clear the great mercy God holds for all who humble themselves before Him – “seventy times seven times,” eternally, He forgives. His reign is like the king who “wrote off the debt,” though it was “a huge amount,” of his servant who begged his mercy. For the Lord is “moved with pity” at our contrition for our sins. But the same forgiveness we must offer to others if we are to prove that His blood runs in our veins. The master tells his wicked servant: “I canceled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. Should you not have dealt mercifully with your fellow servant, as I dealt with you?” And indeed the fires of hell and purgatory await those who break their bond of justice and mercy with the Lord by failing to manifest the same grace that has been revealed to their souls. We are sinners and must see ourselves so. The Lord forgives and we must accept His grace. Others seek our mercy and we must grant it to them. This is how the kingdom works. Those who do not follow the Lord’s way of compassion do not enter there.

Brothers and sisters, we must be as Azariah, who “stood up in the fire and prayed aloud.” For all, we must humbly intercede before our merciful God even in this dark world. And for the contrition we show for our sins and those of others, the Lord holds an eternal reward. As our priests, as Peter, as God Himself, let us forgive one another; if we receive one another humbly and mercifully, the Lord will receive us in His grace, in His justice.

Lent

L. 3. Wed.

Wednesday

(Dt.4:1,5-9; Ps.147:12-13,15-16,19-20; Mt.5:17-19)

“What great nation has statutes and decrees
that are as just as this whole law?”

“He has proclaimed His word to Jacob, His statutes and ordinances to Israel.” The Lord in His grace “sends forth His command to the earth; swiftly runs His word!” And as the snow and the rain come down to nourish the land, to bring life to the earth, so His Word is food and life to all who listen to it. By His Word He “strengthen[s] the bars of [our] gates,” giving us protection against the tribulations of this world, and by it He “bless[es] [our] children within” us, making fruitful all our endeavors. By fulfilling and teaching His commands, we find life eternal in the kingdom of God; by breaking them and leading others to do so, we court death.

And so why should the Word be withheld from the ears of the flock? By his silence does not a priest give credence to the breaking of the law? And then are not the results upon his soul? Has the devil so blinded his eyes to the truth that he cannot see the life-giving water the Word of God is, that His commands are not burdensome but bring release from labor under the weight of sin? By withholding such nourishment does he hope to increase his flock? O but it is so hard to open my mouth, you say, so difficult to speak the truth. Better you die to self now than to find your soul dead to the kingdom of heaven.

Brothers and sisters, it is fulfilling “the smallest letter of the law... the smallest part of the letter,” that brings us to perfection, that brings us to the life that is our God. Ignorance shall not bring you there. As Moses instructs of the commands of the Lord, “Observe them carefully, for thus you will give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations.” For they are a great gift made

Week 3

known to souls; they are the fountain of life, fulfilled in the flesh of Jesus. So neither practice them in vain “nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live,” for they hold life, and should you lose them, you shall lose the Christ.

Do you desire holiness? Do you wish to be whole? Do you long for the presence of God, thirsting for His truth? Then follow the Word He speaks in your presence today and teach others to do so: Abortion is wrong. Contraception is wrong. Euthanasia is wrong. Premarital sex is wrong. Love of money and goods is deadly. We have the word in our Church – our mouths must speak it, or we shall die. By our Baptism we are all made priests in the sight of God and are called to live and to preach the Word of God. “What great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon Him” or whenever we come to His table of sacrifice to receive Him? In love make His Word and presence known.

L. 3. Thurs.

Thursday

(Jer.7:23-28; Ps.95:1-2,6-9; Lk.11:14-23)

“They walked in the hardness of their evil hearts and turned their backs, not their faces, to me.”

The Lord calls His people to “listen to [His] voice,” to “walk in all [His] ways,” that they “may prosper.” But with whom is there obedience? How many harden their hearts against Him!

Of the people of Jeremiah’s time the Lord says, “Faithfulness has disappeared; the word itself is banished from their speech.” They, as all, should “bow down in worship” and “kneel before the Lord who made us,” but they, as we, do not recognize that “He is our God, and we

Lent

are the people He shepherds, the flock He guides.” They pay no heed to the voice of the prophet.

And this hardness of heart is fulfilled in the opposition of the faithless to Jesus. In our gospel He casts out a devil that a dumb man may speak and some say, “It is by Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that He casts out devils.” Indeed, the hardness of heart does not get any greater than this. And so for this sin against the Holy Spirit and His ways there can be no forgiveness. They call good “evil” and presume that the evil they speak is a good – but they are utterly lost in darkness. “The reign of God is upon” them, and they desire to dwell in the realm of the devil who is being cast from their midst. What can save such a soul? For all prayers the Lord answers.

Brothers and sisters, it is a dark world and a difficult age in which we dwell. But the response of our hearers is not our concern; we must speak as called regardless of the reaction – we must live our vocation despite any opposition. Note the Lord’s words to Jeremiah: “When you speak all these words to them, they will not listen to you either; when you call to them, they will not answer you.” For as with all the prophets, and as with ourselves, he speaks to “the nation which does not listen to the voice of the Lord, its God, or take correction.” To these it is our duty to call; to darkness we must bring light. And realize, too, the fate of Jesus, who will die on the cross for His work to bring salvation to the world. It is this same cross to which we are all called, for it is by this same cross *we* have been called; and those who are yet to be gathered in must hear our voice. Let us stand with the Lord and gather in His grain, despite the stiffened necks we might find. There shall be others like us who hear the cry of Jeremiah and cling to the saving power of Jesus. Test Him not with your own hardness of heart.

Week 3

L. 3. Fri.

Friday

(Hos.14:2-10; Ps.81:6-11,14,17; Mk.12:28-34)

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!”

“There is no other than He,” and so what should we do but “love the Lord [our] God with all [our] heart, with all [our] soul, with all [our] mind, and with all [our] strength”? What promise the Lord makes to us if only we would return to Him and love Him: “If only my people would hear me, and Israel walk in my ways, I would feed them with the best of wheat, and with honey from the rock I would fill them.” Indeed, then we would be “not far from the reign of God,” even here on earth.

Brothers and sisters, we “have collapsed through [our] guilt.” We have had “strange god[s]” among us and said, “‘Our god,’ to the work of our hands.” Why should we continue so blind? Why should we continue stumbling as sinners – why do we find the straight paths of the Lord so difficult to walk? He will “forgive all iniquity” and strengthen us in justice; if we turn to Him, He will “heal [our] defection” and “love [us] freely.” “In distress you called, and I rescued you,” He says in the words of our psalmist, and His words are true. Turning away His wrath, He shall become “like the dew for Israel.” And with His living water to nourish us, we “shall blossom like the lily... blossom like the olive tree.” We “shall dwell in His shade and raise grain,” our “fragrance like the Lebanon cedar.” We must but love God and our neighbor, and we shall “bear fruit.”

“Let him who is wise understand these things; let him who is prudent know them.” There is no God in all the world but the Lord, and it is He in whom “the orphan finds compassion.” Why should you continue in your vain pursuits when love awaits your turning to Him? What refuge can you find in your false gods? In them and in

Lent

your pride you indeed will find yourself orphaned, cut off from the love that only the Father holds. But He loves the orphan, brother, and so He calls to your soul to return to Him with all your heart. In this is true wisdom; in Him you will find strength.

There is no further question when the love of God is known. When His presence is revealed we fall silent, for nothing can be said in the face of Truth. Listen, brothers and sisters; but listen – and then do.

L. 3. Sat.

Saturday

(Hos.6:1-6; Ps.51:3-4,18-21,Hos.6:6; Lk.18:9-14)

“As certain as the dawn is His coming,
and His judgment shines forth like the light of day!”

It is night. There is darkness. In this world of sin we are afflicted on account of our guilt, for our failures to love God. And so David cries out in our psalm, “Have mercy, O God, in your goodness”; and so the tax collector in our gospel “beat[s] his breast and say[s], ‘O God, be merciful to me, a sinner’”; and so with all the afflicted, in the words of Hosea, we should “return to the Lord, for it is He who has rent, but He will heal us.”

Brothers and sisters, we must “strive to know the Lord,” for “He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain that waters the earth” to cleanse us of our sin and make us fruitful again. To us the Lord will “be bountiful... by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.” He will grant us a place for worship and again “be pleased with due sacrifices, burnt offerings and holocausts.” Our prayers shall again come before Him. But if our piety is not to be “like a morning cloud, like the dew that passes early away,” we must come to know and love God. And the first step to knowing God and showing our desire for

Week 3

His love is the recognition of our own sinfulness before Him, for “he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Yes, brothers and sisters, “in the greatness of [His] compassion [He will] wipe out [our] offense.” “He will revive us after two days; on the third day He will raise us up.” But first we must die. We must die to the sinful pride that afflicts our souls and leads us from the light that shines, that awaits all our coming to Him in blessed humility. For He desires to show us mercy, but mercy we must have. He longs to bring us light, but light we must seek to find. His judgment, which is just, must be our desire, and it will come to us and wash us free of all our sin. And we shall know Him. And His love shall be our own. And only light will shine in our souls.

It is night, brothers and sisters. There is darkness. Our sins are with us still. But the Lord is coming: the light is upon us. Turn to it now, and live.

Lent

L. 4. Sun. (A)

Fourth Week

Sunday (A)

(1Sm.16:1b,6-7,10-13a; Ps.23:1-6; Eph.5:8-14; Jn.9:1-41)

“I am the light of the world.”

And by that light alone we see. By this light which comes from God we who were born blind, who were born into sin, have our eyes opened. And so having escaped the darkness we “live as children of light.”

When David was presented before Samuel, immediately the prophet’s eyes were opened to the one on whom God’s favor rested. His eyes which had first “judge[d] from... appearance,” now with the Lord look “into the heart.” How clearly he hears the Lord speak to him, “There – anoint him, for this is the one!” And how readily he takes “the horn of oil in hand” and anoints the new king. And how wonderfully “from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.”

Here is our own baptism in the Lord foretold. Here is our own anointing with the oil of Christ presaged. And as “Jesus made clay and anointed [the] eyes” of the blind man, so in our baptism we find our own anointing, an anointing which washes us clean of original sin, an anointing which prepares our hearts to receive Him – an anointing which opens our eyes to His light. The eyes of our heart now see. Our souls cry out from their depths of the light which has entered in and made them clean. And so we say with the blind man in the presence of Jesus, “I do believe, Lord,” and we, too, worship Him as our “cup overflows” with “the goodness and kindness” of God.

“Christ will give you light.” For this He has come into the world, “that those who do not see might see.” In the words of Scripture, Paul entreats us today: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead.” The Lord has come to

Week 4

give us light. As long as we say, “‘We see,’ so [our] sin remains”; we must be blind, we must recognize sin’s darkness encroaching upon our souls... and then we would “have no sin,” for then Jesus would remove from us our sin – then He would bring us light.

“Everything exposed by the light becomes visible,” and so we must bring our sins before Him, and from the dead we shall rise... and with His light we shall shine. May the Lord anoint us all with the oil of Christ, and may we be faithful to that anointing.

(Note: In Confession as in Baptism we are washed clean of our sins by Christ, and light is thus brought to our eyes. Constant recourse we have to this preservation of our souls.)

L. 4. Sun. (B)

Sunday (B)

(2Chr.36:14-16,19-23; Ps.137:1-6; Eph.2:4-10; Jn.3:14-21)

“By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept.”

For “practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the Lord’s temple,” the people of God “were carried captive to Babylon.” For all their “infidelity” they were forced to watch as “their enemies burnt the house of God [and] tore down the walls of Jerusalem.” And so did their “tongue[s] cleave to [their] palate[s]” in a foreign land; so they “hung up [their] harps”; so their “right hand[s] [were] forgotten”... They could not sing the praises of the Lord; they could not strum to His glory – all the works of their hands were stilled. They could but weep in desolation.

So are we like them in our sins. So do our transgressions silence our tongues and make us lame and ineffective. So were we dead as these before Christ Jesus came to save us. And as the Israelites were called back to

Lent

the city of peace and entreated to build the Lord's house there once again, as they found their release from exile by the king of Persia speaking in the name of God... just as these could enter in once more to the "song of the Lord," so we now find our freedom from the chains which bound us, and to the Lord's temple come proclaiming His gracious salvation.

No more should we cry, brothers and sisters. No more should we sit idly as the streams of this world pass us mockingly by. No, now we must come resolutely to the Christ of God, for the word has gone forth to the ends of the earth that all who love Him should come into His light. "By grace [we] have been saved"; by the Lord's immeasurable kindness we have been redeemed – in His love we must now sing our song. "For we are His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance," and so our work must now be accomplished in Him.

"Whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God." And so "saved through faith" we must now bring before Him the offering of our lives. There is no longer cause to hide. There is no longer need to weep for our sin, to find the oppression of the world and the devil too much to bear. No, the gates of Jerusalem are opened once again, and the Lord God has "seated us with Him in the heavens in Christ Jesus." Here in this light let us now find our home. Here in His presence let us begin to live the Lord's eternal salvation. Our tears of sorrow, with our condemnation, have passed.

Week 4

L. 4. Sun. (C)

Sunday (C)

(Jos.5:9a,10-12; Ps.34:2-7,9; 2Cor.5:17-21; Lk.15:1-3,11-32)

“Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you.”

As the Israelites now realize their redemption from slavery in Egypt as they step into the Promised Land, so the prodigal son comes to his own redemption, his own release from slavery as a hired hand in a foreign land, as he returns to his father’s house. Yes, as the Israelites “ate of the produce of the land” for the first time after the feast of Passover, so the prodigal son feasts on the “fattened calf” slaughtered for him by his merciful father. And the redemption of both is a redemption from sin.

Today we hear quite clearly “the message of reconciliation” proclaimed throughout our readings. It is a call to all souls and a thanksgiving to God, “who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ.” And will we come to the water and drink? Will we leave behind “the pods on which the swine fe[e]d” and come to His table to eat? Will we too come to our senses and, realizing the mercy the Father holds for all His children, return to the House of God and feast in the land to which He leads us?

It seems certain, and simple, that we should join David in his song of praise, that we should heed him as he entreats our souls: “Glorify the Lord with me.” For as “from all his distress He saved him,” so from all our distress He saves us; and so nothing should fill our hearts but joy. “He was lost and has been found,” the Lord declares in jubilation over every poor sinner who returns to His fold. And so, should we not respond gratefully to the appeal of Paul and all those entrusted with “the ministry of reconciliation” to indeed “be reconciled to God.” In faith let us confess our sins and know the gracious blood of our Redeemer pouring upon our souls.

Lent

“For our sake He made Him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” And now He waits on the road before His House for our return. Now He longs to open the doors of forgiveness and let us into His dwelling. Now He would see the sacrifice of His Son bear fruit, that we all might be as He is. Accept His removal of sin like a sword in the depths of your soul, and enter into His kingdom.

L. 4. Mon.

Monday

(Is.65:17-21; Ps.30:2,4-6,11-13; Jn.4:43-54)

“You changed my mourning into dancing.”

Here in the midst of Lent we find the purpose of all our suffering, the hope to which we all are called. “At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing.” And thus does this time of penance and fasting lead to the abundance found in Easter joy. For what is darkness but the world in which we dwell, and what is the dawn but the coming of Jesus to our hearts, the kingdom of heaven within us? And even in the midst of this darkness, the light begins to shine. “Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth,” the Lord says. And today we hear that reassuring voice speaking to our waiting souls.

In our gospel today we find a marvelous sign of the light that follows the darkness, of the joy that follows sorrow. A royal official, a man in darkness for his lack of faith in God – and whose darkness is compounded by his position of authority under a faithless king – comes to the true King of the Jews, the Light of God. In sorrow he mourns the imminent death of his son... and so the darkness is quite complete. But the man’s son shall not die, and neither shall his hope of salvation. For it is great faith he shows. Enlightened by the One he seeks, he believes, and so his son is saved by the Son of the Most

Week 4

High, and so he enters the fold of Heaven. What greater joy could he have hoped to find? For not only is his son “brought... up from the nether world,” but indeed he (with the unbelievers he represents) is “preserved... from among those going down into the pit.” No greater words of joy could we read than these: “He and his whole household thereupon became believers.”

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has made us to be a people of “rejoicing and happiness.” He tells us so today through the prophet Isaiah: “I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people a delight.” This is our destiny; this is our call. If we must suffer for a time in this land of darkness, in this time of penance, let us be assured of the fullness of joy that comes Easter morning: “No longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there, or the sound of crying.” Yes, how particularly marvelous it is to hear of this light before us even as we stand in the midst of the darkness; what even greater joy do we feel!

The Lord conquers all. He wishes only life for our soul. And that life is upon us even this day. At the wedding feast we shall dance: “sing praise to the Lord, you His faithful ones, and give thanks to His holy name.”

L. 4. Tues.

Tuesday

(Ez.47:1-9,12; Ps.46:2-3,5-6,8-9; Jn.5:1-3,5-16)

“There is a stream whose runlets gladden the city of God,
the holy dwelling of the Most High.”

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is our living water.

In our first reading, Ezekiel speaks of his heavenly vision of the river of God which runs from His holy temple. The water, which increases as it flows further from its source, eventually “empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh.” Along both banks of the river are trees whose “leaves shall not fade, nor their fruit

Lent

fail... for they [are] watered by the flow from the sanctuary.” Their fruit nourishes and their leaves heal.

What is this river and this temple? What is this sea and what are these fruit trees revealed to the eyes of the prophet? Brothers and sisters, that Jesus is the river, the healing water, is made poignantly clear in our gospel. The sick man struggles daily to plunge himself into the healing pool at Bethesda but is never able to find the assistance he needs. When Jesus asks him if he wants to be healed and the man explains his plight, the Lord immediately states: “Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk!” The healing waters have come to him, and he is cured.

Yes, Jesus is the living water, and the cross is as the temple from which His healing blood flows. Upon us all who have prepared the cross and set it in place by our sins – which have made *our* water undrinkable – His grace pours to make us whole... and so we are the salt sea made fresh. And so the trees on the river’s banks, bearing fresh fruit each of the months, do we become, as we walk in the paths of the twelve apostles... who are first to know His redemptive power, and with whom God becomes “our refuge and our strength.”

“Come! behold the deeds of the Lord, the astounding things He has wrought on earth.” For by the river that flows from His pierced side He has prepared a people and a kingdom. And all shall see what Ezekiel sees; all shall know what the prophet is shown – the water of the Lord flows out now to the ends of the world, making all whole and fruitful by His presence.

L. 4. Wed.

Wednesday

(Is. 49:8-15; Ps.145:8-9,13-14,17-18; Jn.5:17-30)

“Just as the Father possesses life in Himself,
so He has granted it to the Son to have life in Himself.”

Week 4

Here the great mystery of the unity of Father and Son is revealed, and so also our salvation.

God is life. The Father is the great I AM, He who will be what He will be and do what He will do – He who holds the world and all its wonders in His creating Hand. And Jesus is as He is. He shares absolutely in the Life that is the Father. “Speaking of God as His own Father, [He is] thereby making Himself God’s equal.” And this perfect union is most clearly evident in the fact that “the Father has given over to Him power to pass judgment.” For who can judge the soul of man but God, and so, who is Jesus but God Himself?

And this union of Father and Son in the absolute love that gives proof of the Spirit’s presence, and thus completes the Holy Trinity, is the key to our readings today. Thus, though the thrust of the Word is our own salvation from sin and death, this is only effected in the love of the Father for the Son – for it is in our own union with Jesus and in His washing us clean from sin by standing in our place upon the cross that we find union with the Father, that we find the Life to which we all are called... in whom we find our home of love.

The Lord says, “I will cut a road through all my mountains, and make my highways level.” Jesus the Son is that road by which the Father “comforts His people and shows mercy to His afflicted” by leading them back to Him, guiding them “beside springs of water” that “they shall not hunger or thirst” but “find pasture” in His arms. For “can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb?” Greater than any mother’s love is the Lord’s love for us, and this He makes known through His only Son.

Brothers and sisters, “the dead shall hear the voice of God’s Son, and those who have heeded it shall live.” Even now the Lord is “saying to the prisoners: Come out! To those in darkness: Show yourselves!” Out from the

Lent

tombs He calls us, for He is “compassionate toward all His works” and desires in His perfect will that all share in His holiness, in His Life. Let us do right in Him, and as His Son we, too, shall live.

L. 4. Thurs.

Thursday

(Ex.32:7-14; Ps.106:4,19-23; Jn.5:31-47)

“If you believed Moses you would then believe me,
for it was about me that he wrote.”

As Moses wrote, so Jesus speaks. As Moses wrote, so Jesus is. The eternal life to which the Scriptures testify is now in our midst. The Word has come to life; the Law is now fulfilled. The “form [we] have never seen” now stands before us. The “voice [we] have never heard” now speaks to our ears. But do we “have His word abiding in our hearts”? Do we “believe the One [the Father] has sent”? “The works the Father has given [Jesus] to accomplish” “testify on [His] behalf.” Let us exult in their light.

The Lord “had done great deeds in the land of Egypt,” “wondrous deeds” and “terrible things” in the sight of the Israelites through His servant Moses. But “they forgot the God who had saved them,” “making for themselves a molten calf and worshiping it” instead of the living God. They could not wait for the Word to come to them; their hearts were not set on Moses’ return from the mountain with the Law of God. And so, for their lack of faith God “spoke of destroying them.” The fire of wrath the Lord would have “blazed up against them to consume them” – such was the thought of His heart.

But Moses “withstood Him in the breach.” “Let your blazing wrath die down; relent in punishing your people,” he begs. And so, because of Moses’ intercession, “the Lord relented in the punishment He had threatened on His

Week 4

people” for their lack of faith in Him. And now it is Jesus who stands in the breach made by our sins, preventing our eternal punishment at the hands of a righteous God. For by all accounts we deserve death for *our* lack of faith; but in His grace the chasm between us and God He fills by stretching out His arms on the cross.

Brothers and sisters, let us believe in His redemptive sacrifice. Let it never be said of us, “You do not have the love of God in your hearts,” for such a state would mean the end of our days. But God has promised: “I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.” About this Moses writes, and the words speak of Jesus, He who is our salvation. Let us not forget the One who saves us in His love, “on whom we have set [our] hopes.”

L. 4. Fri.

Friday

(Ws.2:1,12-22; Ps.34:17-21,23; Jn.7:1-2,10,25-30)

“He calls blest the destiny of the just
and boasts that God is His Father.”

And for such He shall be persecuted; for such He shall be killed. For to the wicked “He is the censure of [their] thoughts; merely to see Him is a hardship” for those who stray from the Lord’s commands. And so, in vain attempt to spare themselves the just judgment of the Lord, in their jealousy they say to one another: “With revilement and torture let us put Him to the test”; and so they “condemn Him to a shameful death,” tempting the Lord God to watch over Him.

Evil are their thoughts and wicked are their ways. But the one “they want to kill,” the one “they tr[y] to seize,” escapes their grasp, for indeed the Lord “watches over all His bones; not one of them shall be broken.” And they cannot take hold of Him unless He so wills it; so,

Lent

frustrated are their efforts “because His hour ha[s] not yet come.”

Even when His hour comes and He is delivered into the hands of the prince of darkness, still their violence will not touch Him; yet will He be protected by the Lord, as are all who follow Him. Yes, David sings of what he knows: “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit He saves.” And so, even in distress, even in death, the Lord is near to His chosen ones. The Son of God shall ever be delivered from the grasp of those whose “wickedness blind[s] them.”

Jesus stands up in the temple and cries out: “I was sent by One who has the right to send... it is from Him I come.” He declares openly that He is the Son of God, and the wicked who would hide their sins seek to destroy Him for bringing such light. But it shall indeed be proven that He is the Son of the Most High, that God is His Father. The “recompense of holiness” shall be witnessed by all eyes. In subjection to their evil plots, in dying upon the wood of the cross, and in His subsequent resurrection, Jesus shall utterly destroy all the power of wicked men and reveal the one true light that shines, that cannot be overcome by darkness.

“We know where this man is from,” they say, and so they are blind. For God the Father is not of this dark earth, and neither is His just Son.

L. 4. Sat.

Saturday

(Jer.11:18-20; Ps.7:2-3,9-12; Jn.7:40-53)

“Let us destroy the tree in its vigor;
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will be spoken no more.”

With these words “they were hatching plots against” Jeremiah, and in the same way against Jesus. And so,

Week 4

“like a trusting Lamb led to slaughter,” “like the lion’s prey, to be torn to pieces, with no one to rescue” are they. But “the malice of the wicked [shall] come to an end.”

“The upright of heart” are ever persecuted. Even Nicodemus, “one of their own number,” a member of the Pharisees who are seeking the life of the Lord, was “taunted” when he “spoke up to say, ‘Since when does our law condemn any man without first hearing him and knowing the facts?’” But the Lord “sustain[s] the just” “because of the innocence that is” theirs. In Him do they “take refuge,” and He will not leave them a prey to their teeth.

Even the temple guards recognize the power of the word that comes from Christ. “No man ever spoke like that before,” they state as the reason that “no one laid hands on Him.” “He is the Messiah,” it is sure, and only the hardest of heart are able to blind themselves to the authority that issues forth from His lips. But the Lord is the “searcher of mind and heart,” of “heart and soul”; He is the just Judge, the just God, and so even as He rescues the innocent from trial, He “punishes day by day” the evil man.

Their plots shall come to naught; in vain do they pursue Him. For though He shall allow them “to apprehend Him,” He will be eternally free from their clutches. Indeed, He will be fixed to a cross. Indeed, like an innocent lamb He shall not open His mouth to protest or to call upon the angels for assistance. And they shall think that He is theirs. But rise from the dead He will, and His Name will be spoken to the ends of the earth. For nothing can destroy the power of the Word of God.

Lent

L. 5. Sun. (A)

Fifth Week

Sunday (A)

(Ez.37:12-14; Ps.130:1-8; Rom.8:8-11; Jn.11:1-45)

“I am the resurrection and the life;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

“You shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people!” says the Lord God through the prophet Ezekiel. “The one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through His Spirit dwelling in you,” says St. Paul. And our psalm sings of the Lord’s “plenteous redemption,” that “He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities”; and so, “more than sentinels wait for the dawn, let [us] wait for the Lord,” who dispels all darkness, all death, by His Word, by His presence among us. Let us but believe in Him, and we shall live.

The dawn comes to Bethany, to Martha and Mary, and to Lazarus. It comes to us all in this powerful sign of the Lord’s conquering of all darkness and death, “that [we] may believe.” Wrapped in burial cloth is Lazarus, laying in the sealed tomb four days. The tears of a people are shed for the loved one who has died, and Jesus joins their weeping. Deeply human is the Lord, and so, “perturbed and deeply troubled” He becomes at the sorrow we all know when death is near. He longs ever to cry out to us not to mourn, but believe, and now we hear His voice call upon the Father’s name; and now as He “crie[s] out in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’” we see that what He says is true: He is the resurrection and the life. And so, believing in Him, no longer does the Christian fear death.

Death is of the flesh, but we are “in the spirit.” “The body is dead because of sin,” but “the spirit is alive

Week 5

because of righteousness.” And so, as we rise from the graves opened by the powerful word of the Lord, as we rise from our iniquities unto eternal life, we know His Spirit at work within us, the Spirit of Christ that is only life. In Him let us take refuge; in Him let us believe. He is here with us to keep us from death, to release us from all darkness – to free us all from sin. Let us remain with Him and so have eternal life.

L. 5. Sun. (B)

Sunday (B)

(Jer.31:31-34; Ps.51:3-4,12-15; Heb.5:7-9; Jn.12:20-33)

“Father, glorify your name.”

Jesus cries out in supplication to Him who is “able to save Him from death,” but He prays not to be saved from death, not to be saved from the sacrifice He must make, but only that in His death the Father might glorify His name. His “hour has come,” He knows. He hears from His apostles of the Greeks who seek Him, and He knows it is now time for Him to return to the Father and for His apostles to take over the work He has begun – to carry His salvation to the nations. And though He is “troubled,” knowing “the kind of death He would die,” knowing that it is the only path to the Father, yet He does not ask to be saved “from this hour.” His only desire is to fulfill the Father’s will by being “lifted up from the earth” in crucifixion and resurrection that He might “draw everyone to [Him]self” and to the glory in the Father He knows.

And of course “He was heard because of His reverence.” Because His cry is sincere, is a laying down of His life in perfect humility and perfect love, the Father readily answers His prayer. Even in “a voice c[o]me from heaven” He responds, speaking not for the sake of His Son – who needs no such assurance, who is dead to Himself and serves the Father perfectly – but for those whom the

Lent

Son would save by His “fall[ing] to the ground” in death. For them, for us, the Father answers, for this is the Son’s wish.

And if we are holy as He, we “all, from least to greatest, shall know” the Lord our God just as He knows Him – we shall have our prayers answered as readily as the cries of supplication of our Savior. And so we shall be saved; and so we shall be preserved from death... and so we, too, shall glorify the Father’s name. As the Lord listens to David when he cries out in his penitent psalm, so shall God come and make our hearts clean: so shall He come and write His name upon them as we cry out to Him. And we shall be blessed as Jesus, and we shall stand just as steadfast. Renewed in spirit, our offenses wiped out, we shall stand in the Son’s stead upon the cross and in the kingdom.

“Your Holy Spirit take not from me,” O Lord, for it is the proof of your presence within me; it is the seal of your Son and His blood upon my soul. By your Spirit I know I shall be protected from death; by His touch I am led to my salvation. Father in heaven, glorify thy name in me as in thy Son.

L. 5. Sun. (C)

Sunday (C)

(Is.43:16-21; Ps.126:1-6; Phil.3:8-14; Jn.8:1-11)

“Forgetting what lies behind
but straining forward to what lies ahead,
I continue my pursuit toward the goal.”

In times past the Lord opened “a way in the sea” for the Israelites to pass through, while Pharaoh’s army He “snuffed out and quenched like a wick.” Afterward, He “brought back the captives of Zion” from the lands to which they had been scattered to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. “Great things” the Lord has done for His

Week 5

people, but through the prophet Isaiah He enjoins all to “remember not the events of the past,” to “consider not” these mighty and wondrous deeds. For as marvelous as His deeds once were, now He proclaims, “See, I am doing something new!” And indeed, something new is in our midst.

We see perfect evidence of this surpassing work in the apostle Paul, who has “accepted the loss of all things” – including any righteousness this former Pharisee may have had by the law – that he may “gain Christ and be found in Him,” for he knew that all good things are to be found in Jesus the Lord. And now he is but “depending on faith to know Him and the power of His resurrection.”

Here is the *new thing* which is done: the only Son has died and been raised from the grave, never to die again. And so Paul seeks to share “of His sufferings,” to be “conformed to His death,” that he too “may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Nothing else is worth our time or our breath in this world; only this “one thing” calls us upward to God.

And see how this new thing has affected the adulterous woman, the sinner who represents us all. She is brought forward in all her abomination, deserving death for the act she has knowingly committed... yet she leaves Christ’s presence an entirely free woman. Free not merely to go as she pleases, but free from the sin which should have spelled her condemnation.

Here is the new thing as it affects every human soul: the forgiveness of our sins. And what joy this should bring us! For if Jesus who is to judge the heart of all sentient beings does not condemn us, who shall stand with stone in hand to punish our transgression? But heed, my brother, my sister, the Lord’s due warning, if you would truly know the grace of this new thing – “from now on do not sin anymore” – or what is new and bringing refreshment will become old and stale very soon. Forward

Lent

we must strive all the days of our lives, leaving well behind our sins; only in heaven will we take full hold of Him who has taken possession of us by His mercy.

L. 5. Mon. (A, B)

Monday (A,B)

(Dn.13:1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62; Ps.23:1-6; Jn.8:1-11)

“Let the man among you who has no sin
be the first to cast a stone at her.”

“Then the audience drifted away one by one, beginning with the elders.” And no one was left to accuse her.

In both our gospel and our first reading a woman is accused of adultery, one justly, the other unjustly. Yet both are freed. For under the old law the innocent were to be set free, but under the new, even the guilty. In the blood of Christ sinners are saved from the fate they deserve; the Lord does not condemn us, and only He has power to do so – for it is always against Him that we sin.

It is curious to note that in both reading and gospel the accused woman is brought before the man against whom she is principally accused of sinning. In the case of Susanna, it is her husband Joakim to whom the people come with their difficult questions, “because he was the most respected of them all”; and the woman in the gospel is brought before Jesus, the Lord and the bridegroom of us all. It is only wed to Him that we find salvation, and He does not disappoint the repentant adulteress today. Nor shall He condemn any of us who stand before Him weeping for our sins against His pure love.

There is a “dark valley” through which we all must walk. One day we shall all stand before the Judge. Some will be persecuted only for righteousness’ sake, accused of that which they have not committed; others will stand in the full light of their sin. But all before Christ might find

Week 5

forgiveness, if they but realize their faults and who it is stands before them. For the love of God is unimaginable; it is not something we humans can put our fingers upon. The love of God and the grace and mercy He holds forth will never be deserved by our race. Yet they are there. Yet we are washed clean. Yet the Truth will set us free.

Let no man condemn another; “the angel of God waits” “to receive the sentence from Him” – none of us is able to move His hand. And so, always we must forgive to find His grace alive in our souls.

L. 5. Mon. (C)

Monday (C)

(Dn.13:1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62; Ps.23:1-6; Jn.8:12-20)

“Judgment of mine is valid because I am not alone.
I have at my side the One who sent me, the Father.”

“It is laid down in [the Mosaic] law that evidence given by two persons is valid.” Thus does the assembly condemn Susanna to death, because the two elders testify as one against her. But then “God stirred up the holy spirit of a young boy named Daniel,” and so we find a better pair of witnesses – the Spirit and Daniel – to refute the lies of the wicked elders. And so Daniel, empowered by the Spirit, separates these evil men; and so the lack of integrity and unity in their testimony is exposed; and so “an angel of God shall receive the sentence from Him and split [them] in two” – the “fine lie” they have told will cost them their heads.

And can there be any truer witness of two than that which is known in the Father and the Son, both of whom testify, in the Spirit, that Jesus is “the light of the world”? This great truth cannot be hidden, and so those whose witness is most perfect must speak it, that “no follower of [His] shall ever walk in darkness” but “shall possess the light of life.” This is the will of God, whose Word is true;

Lent

and this revelation shall be accomplished despite any deceptions devised by those who walk in darkness.

Brothers and sisters, be comforted that the Lord is “at [your] side, with [His] rod and staff that give [you] courage.” With Him and with His Spirit you shall be saved from all evil. Be as Susanna in your time of trial: “Through her tears she looked up to heaven, for she trusted in the Lord wholeheartedly,” and He will strengthen you and “spread the table before [you] in the sight of [your] foes.” Taking Him as your witness, you cannot be denied. And the same justification she has known will be your own.

All wicked men shall meet their end, for lies cannot stand and the “past sins” of the false judges shall “come to term.” There is but one Judge whose verdict is true and lasting, and all those who find refuge in Him and His Father shall stand as He does unto eternity.

L. 5. Tues.

Tuesday

(Nm.21:4-9; Ps.102:2-3,16-21; Jn.8:21-30)

“From heaven He beheld the earth,
to hear the groaning of the prisoners,
to release those doomed to die.”

As the Lord has said to the Pharisees: “You belong to what is below; I belong to what is above.” And truly, how could we come to where He is unless He reached down to lead us there?

The Israelites show just how much they are of this world below when they reject the food of the heavens in utter bitterness: “We are disgusted with this wretched food!” they say of the manna the Lord has provided. And punishment comes to them in the form of a serpent for their cursing the hand of God.

Week 5

And the Pharisees are the same. They have the living bread from heaven standing before them, teaching them, yet they cannot grasp what He says and with mockery ask, “Who are you, then?” when He tells them, “I AM.” And so they too “will surely die in their sins” for their rejection of the great I AM.

But still there is hope. For the Israelites, Moses “make[s] a serpent and mount[s] it on a pole,” and those who gaze upon it are healed from the serpent’s deadly bite. And, of course, Jesus Himself will mount the wood of the cross and be fixed there – and the Pharisees and we who gaze upon our sins (which, as with the serpents, have caused this punishment), we who see what we have done and repent thereof, shall be healed, restored, forgiven.

“When you lift up the Son of Man, you will come to realize that I AM,” says the Lord. And now we look up at Him who has died for us and pray He will take us where He has gone, that our cry will come to Him, that He will regard “the prayer of the destitute” and lift us up to heaven with Him as we share in His cross.

L. 5. Wed.

Wednesday

(Dn.3:14-20,91-92,95; Dn.3:52-56; Jn.8:31-42)

“The truth will set you free.”

Sin binds. Like the cords with which “the strongest men in [Nebuchadnezzar’s] army bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,” sin fetters our souls and casts us “into the white-hot furnace.” “Everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin.” But for those like these three faithful servants who “will not... worship the golden statue that [the king of this world] set up,” there is freedom. For the Lord who is “praiseworthy and exalted above all forever,” who sits “on the throne of [His] kingdom... in the firmament of heaven,” “can save us

Lent

from the white-hot furnace and from [the king's] hands." For those who "yielded their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God," sin holds no sway. And so we find them "unfettered and unhurt, walking in the fire," the angel of God at their side.

God sits on His "throne upon the cherubim," but He "look[s] into the depths." And so He sends His Son to walk among us and set us free from slavery to sin. As Jesus says, "I came forth from God, and am here." Here *is* the Son; here is the true reflection of the Father. Here, indeed, is Truth itself, by whom we are all set free.

How Jesus strove to bring the truth to "those Jews who believed in Him" but struggled in their acceptance. But the Lord does not pull punches; He does not gloss over the truth, however harsh it may seem. He tells them plainly, "You are trying to kill me," and so they do the works of Satan – and so do they sin. In their pride they deny their sin, and the envious plots in their hearts: "Our father is Abraham," they argue, and not the evil one. "We are no illegitimate breed!" But the truth is that they are, and though it mean His death, Jesus must deliver this truth unto them... for it is all that will set them free.

How little it seems the truth is brought to the people today, and so, how few it seems are set free. As sin goes merrily along, the devil sits laughing... But God is still God, and the Son is still the Son, and all who give themselves to Him and not the idols of this earth will still find themselves set free. Brothers and sisters, "if the Son frees you, you will really be free." Confront your own sin, and entrust all to Him.

Week 5

L. 5. Thurs.

Thursday

(Gn.17:3-9; Ps.105:4-9; Jn.8:51-59)

“Before Abraham came to be, I AM.”

Abraham is a great man, the blessed patriarch, to whom God made the promise: “I will maintain my covenant with you and your descendants after you throughout the ages as an everlasting pact, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” So Abraham becomes “the father of a host of nations,” not just by lineage, but by faith in the promise God has given him and the keeping of the covenant with Him. Abraham is father to all who believe in the one God: the sons of Israel, the Jews; the sons of Ishmael, the Muslims; and all who worship the living Lord and “seek to serve Him constantly.”

Yet as great as Abraham is, as fertile as he has become, Jesus is the greater and the more prosperous, for He Himself is the LORD our God, from whom Abraham receives his promise and so his greatness. “Abraham rejoiced that he might see [Jesus’] day. He saw it and was glad.” For here come to us is the only Son of the God before whom he “prostrated himself”; here is the LORD of all the nations of whom Abraham is father.

Jesus is equal with the Father, coeternal and all-powerful. He does not make Himself so but receives such glory from the Father, with whom He is always. How hard it is for the Jews to hear this. Though according to their faith they have been waiting for just such arrival of the Holy One, of the Messiah, yet their hearts are unable to accept such divine wonder. And so “they picked up rocks to throw at Jesus” upon His solemn declaration of His divinity.

Is it not just so hard for all of us who call ourselves believers to come to terms with the awesome majesty of

Lent

Jesus our God? It seems something so far beyond our belief, that God could walk in our midst. And yet HE IS; and so we must see how much greater than any man He is. For though fully a man born in time and murdered upon a cross, yet He is God, living forever as LORD of all. So great a gift, so wonderful a presence, is all that assures us that we “shall never see death” but be as He is, alive in the kingdom as He has promised. Keep His word, and the Word of Life will be with you.

L. 5. Fri.

Friday

(Jer.20:10-13; Ps.18:2-7; Jn.10:31-42)

“He has rescued the life of the poor
from the power of the wicked.”

As Jeremiah’s persecutors surround him on every side but are “put to utter shame” when he calls out to the Lord, so as the Jews “again tried to arrest Him,” Jesus again “eluded their grasp.” And so when “the breakers of death surged around [us], the destroying floods overwhelmed [us]...” so when our sins seemed to have conquered our souls, the Lord came to save us.

Evil is all around. Always there is “terror on every side!” and those who would shout, “Denounce! Let us denounce him!” because of our missteps, because of our stumbling into sin. Ever the devil is on the watch to trap us with his wiles and cast our souls into “the nether world.” But always, too, the Lord is present, and when to Him we entrust our cause, saying with David, “O Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer,” whenever we call upon His name, He hears and saves us from “the snares of death.” “Praised be the Lord, I exclaim, and I am safe from my enemies,” David sings. “Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord,” Jeremiah echoes, and he, too, is safe. All who call upon Him He hears, and affords them His salvation.

Week 5

“The Jews reached for rocks to stone Him,” but still He called to their hearts: “Many good deeds have I shown you from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” Still He invites them to look upon the good works He has done in His Father’s name to see that He is indeed the Son; still He desires their salvation. The signs He performs are recognized by many people who thus “come to believe in Him,” but the hardness of heart of these the leaders continues to blind their eyes to the truth of what John the Baptist said and what He is. This ignorance shall find its ultimate expression soon in the crucifixion of the Son of God; but even from this the Lord shall deliver Him – and by this sacrifice we shall all be saved. And many more will come to know thereby that He is God.

The Lord rescues all our souls when we cry out to Him. Let us put all trust in His saving grace.

L. 5. Sat.

Saturday

(Ez.37:21-28; Jer.31:10-13; Jn.11:45-57)

“My sanctuary shall be set up among them forever.”

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to “gather [His people] from all sides to bring them back to their land”; He is the “one prince for [us] all” by whom God makes complete the “everlasting covenant” with us: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” It is He “who make[s] Israel holy,” who makes us all one in Himself. And so, “no longer shall [we] defile [our]selves,” but we “shall live by [His] statutes and carefully observe [His] decrees” now written upon our hearts by the power of the Spirit upon His flesh and blood.

In our gospel the Sanhedrin fear the loss of the Jewish nation on earth when they say, “The Romans will come and sweep away our sanctuary and our nation” because of the wonders Jesus performs and the power He has over all

Lent

people. So when Caiaphas asks, “Can you not see that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed?” it is of the protection of the temple and its worship he speaks and which is his concern. But, of course, he unwittingly prophesies the salvation of all in the eternal, heavenly Temple of the New Jerusalem, where Jesus “gather[s] into one all the dispersed children of God.”

Yes, “Jesus would die for the nation”; He would give Himself that all might live. The plan “to kill Him” He shall allow to bear fruit; though all are on the lookout to apprehend Him, yet He shall come to the feast to offer Himself as the spotless Lamb of Passover, to purge the nation of its sins and protect it from final damnation. And so, “He who scattered Israel, now gathers them together, He guards them as a shepherd His flock.” And so we should “come streaming to the Lord’s blessings: the grain, the wine, and the oil” – so we should come now and consume His Body and His Blood. For the New Covenant is now set in place; His sanctuary is here among us. And forever He is seated in the heavenly kingdom to make intercession for us and for the purging of our sins, to draw into the presence of the Father all His holy children.

He is “likely to come to the feast,” brothers and sisters, for the feast would be nothing without Him. It is His sacrifice alone which “turn[s] our mourning into joy,” which “shall make [all] merry and dance” in the sanctuary of God’s love.

2. Holy Week

Passion (Palm) Sunday

(Is.50:4-7; Ps.22:2,8-9,17-20,23-24; Phil.2:6-11;
Mt.26:14-27:66 or Mk.14:1-15:47 or Lk.22:14-23:56)

“His blood be upon us and upon our children.”

“The whole people” cry out for the death of Jesus. “Let Him be crucified,” they shout ever more loudly. The sins of us all demand the death of the Son. And though He would have us not bear such guilt – “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me” – and though even after we have succeeded in our lust for innocent blood, He forgives... yet bear such a burden we must, to find release from its punishment under the shadow of His cross, where, upon the opening of our eyes in the fear of our crimes and the power of Him whom we have crucified, we shall proclaim, “Truly, this was the Son of God!”

Yes, it is an irony that the blood of this “King of the Jews,” the Chosen of the chosen, the Messiah, the Son of God, is upon our souls both for condemnation for the great crime all commit in crucifying the Lord always by our sins; and, of course, for our salvation by its cleansing the same sin from our souls through our belief in Him Who Is. And so He accepts our mockery. And so He remains silent before our accusations against Him. And so He “set [His] face like flint,” enduring “buffets and spitting”; as “many dogs surround” Him and “a pack of evildoers closes in,” He endures all for our sakes, knowing only this will bring us to open our eyes and see the light that is the love of God. “They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones.” Could more of a sacrifice be made for sinful man? Could greater than this be

Lent

accomplished in the name of God? What more need you to believe? O let His blood pour upon you!

Brothers and sisters, Christ Jesus “emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness... becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” God has come among us and suffered all for our sake, that we might be washed clean of all the evil within us by His gentle acceptance of all our hatred, of all our doubt and fear, of all the violence we could mount, saying to our heart: I love you still, and my Father, too... that we might return to the grace that is ours in Him. Let us not be ashamed to bend the knee “at the name of Jesus.” Let “every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” “You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to Him; revere Him all you descendants of Israel.” Let His blood pour upon your soul.

L. Holy Week. Mon.

Monday

(Is.42:1-7; Ps.27:1-3,13-14; Jn.12:1-11)

“I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations.”

He has come “to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who dwell in darkness.” “He establishes justice on the earth,” and this justice is His bringing light to our darkness. But He could not release us from the dungeon unless He Himself had entered the dungeon. How else could light penetrate the darkness? And so He not only enters the veil of flesh, humbling Himself to be born as a man, but also gives Himself up to the death we all must die – in our own form He pays the wages of our sin, that we might be released from its prison.

Holy Week

How could we “be stouthearted” “when evildoers come at [us] to devour [our] flesh,” we who are so weakened by the scourges of sin, if He had not strengthened us by standing in our stead? How could we truly say with David, “Though war be waged upon me, even then will I trust,” if He had not defeated the enemy that comes against us? We can say, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?” only because Jesus has brought God’s justice into our very midst, to our flesh and to our bone, by entering into the world of darkness we have created and taking upon Himself the death we deserved.

Lazarus, who sits at table with Jesus a week before His own death, is a sign of our release from the dungeon, from the tomb of our sin. As “Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in Him on account of Lazarus,” so should all be drawn to the promise of new life which the Lord shall fulfill now in His death and resurrection. And as we enter Holy Week, as we prepare ourselves for the great mysteries of our faith, how appropriate for Jesus to sit at table “in the land of the living” with this dead man. See that He will sit with us all just so in the kingdom of heaven.

Now the light comes; now justice is done. The aromatic fragrance of His holy sacrifice fills this house, and darkness shall be banished forever.

L. Holy Week. Tues.

Tuesday

(Is.49:1-6; Ps.71:1-6,15,17; Jn.13:21-33,36-38)

“I am made glorious in the sight of the Lord,
and my God is now my strength!”

The Lord is with His servant, with Israel, with Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God: “From my mother’s womb you are my strength... O God, you

Lent

have taught me from my youth.” And to this “sharp-edged sword” the Lord has concealed “in the shadow of His arm,” to this “polished arrow” He has hidden in His quiver, God says: “I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” He who was called from birth, given His name in His mother’s womb, prepared before all the ages, now comes to reveal the glory of God.

And how is it “the Son of Man [is] glorified and God is glorified in Him”? We see in our gospel the moment the glorification begins; we see in our gospel the path by which it comes. At table at the Last Supper Jesus grows “deeply troubled,” for the time of His betrayal has come. Judas eats the morsel of food dipped in the dish and “immediately after, Satan entered his heart.” Then, “no sooner had Judas eaten the morsel than he went out,” and we are told: “It was night.” And immediately upon Judas’ leaving, the Lord proclaims His glorification has begun.

Here begins the Passion. Here begins the first of the three days Jesus will spend in the belly of the earth. How unlike the days the Servant spent in His mother’s womb these days shall be! And yet it is precisely these days and in this way that what God has prepared for Him and for all creation shall come to its fulfillment. Now shall the arrow be sharpened fully and shot forth to pierce all men’s hearts with truth – even as the nails pierce His hands and the sword His side. Through the depths of such absolute darkness, light shall shine forth, and this light shall in time reach to the ends of the world.

Now the time has come. Now all shall abandon Him. Now by the Suffering Servant shall all be saved.

L. Holy Week. Wed.

Wednesday

(Is.50:4-9; Ps.69:8-10,21-22,31,33-34; Mt.26:14-25)

“The Son of Man is departing, as Scripture says of Him.”

Holy Week

Of Him in Scripture we read, “Morning after morning He opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back.” Even as death approaches, even as His betrayer goes forth (perhaps especially at this dark time), He sets His face “like flint” to confront those who oppose Him, those who would destroy Him. In His own voice He speaks to us in the first reading and the psalm of His trial and His resolve: “I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard,” though “they put gall in my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” And He stands alone before such blasphemy – “I looked for sympathy, but there was none; for comforters, and I found none.”

Though only one of the Twelve betrays Him, all but John abandon Him in His brokenness; none stands by His side as He “bear[s] insult” in the Name of God. But the Father does not desert Him: “See, the Lord God is my help.” “For the Lord hears the poor, and His own who are in bonds He spurns not.” And when He cries from the cross, it is not His fate He bemoans, but our own, whose dark separation from God He takes upon Himself as our guilt He bears.

Yes, He must depart in this way; He must suffer at our hands. But that it is written so, and that by this our souls are made whole, in no way nullifies that we have sinned – sin remains the evil it is. As for Judas, yet it would have been “better for him if he had never been born,” for the fires of hell are real; and as for the souls who abandon Him, as for *all* His disciples, it is only through similar darkness that we shall come back to His light.

Tears will fill our eyes as we look upon Him whom we have pierced. Yet, fear not, for the Lord hears the cry of the “lowly ones... who seek God”; and Scripture speaks just as faithfully of the third day.

Lent

L. Triduum. Holy Thurs.

Holy Thursday

– Mass of the Lord’s Supper –

(Ex.12:1-8,11-14; Ps.116:12-13,15-18; 1Cor.11:23-26; Jn.13:1-15)

“This cup is the New Covenant in my blood.”

For this cup holds the Blood of our Lord. And, “Seeing the blood, I will pass over you,” says the Lord. “When I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you.” As the Israelites mark each of their houses with the blood of a lamb, so our bodies are marked by the Blood of the Lamb; and so we are saved by the Lord our God and become temples of His Spirit.

“How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?” the psalmist cries in joy. Each day we “offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,” taking up “the cup of salvation” and “call[ing] upon the name of the Lord”: each day we partake of His blessed Body and Blood. And sharing in this celebration of the Eucharist we “proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes”; and so, into our midst He comes.

“He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist” as “a model to follow”: “as I have done for you, you should also do.” He says to His brothers in the upper room the night “His hour had come to pass from this world to the Father”: “You ought to wash one another’s feet.” And so by this teaching, and so by His masterful lead, He multiplies His presence in the world through His twelve apostles. And so shall these souls by whom the Bread of Life is multiplied, by whom we have inheritance with the Lord, wash the feet of all His followers by their witness and the ministry they shall bring to the ends of the earth. And so shall all who have bathed in His Blood be made clean for the Holy Day.

Holy Week

And we, as they, as the Lord, find the strength to lay down our lives in service of one another by being as our Jesus, who was “fully aware that the Father had put everything in His power and that He had come from God and was returning to Him.” Any power that any have comes only from the Father, and comes only through the Son, and is known only in His Blood – which all must share, by which all must be anointed, if we are to be preserved until the coming of the Christ again into this world of darkness.

L. Triduum. Good Fri.

Good Friday

– Celebration of the Lord’s Passion –

(Is.52:13-53:12; Ps.31:2,6,12-13,15-17,25; Heb.4:14-16,5:7-9;
Jn.18:1-19:42)

“He shall be raised high and greatly exalted.”

Here is your king: “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews,” Pilate has written upon His cross. Here He is lifted up, where “many were amazed at Him – so marred was His look beyond human semblance and His appearance beyond the sons of man.” Yet “shall He startle many nations; because of Him kings shall stand speechless.” The Scripture passage is fulfilled: “They will look upon Him whom they have pierced.” And there they shall see that He who “was spurned and avoided by people... one of those from whom people hide their faces,” held in “no esteem” as He was... this same “lamb led to the slaughter” “shall divide the spoils with the mighty”; for as He has been lifted up on the cross, debased beyond all others, so He shall be raised on high in His kingdom, one with the Father in heaven. Here they “wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on His head.” Here they “clothed Him in a purple cloak, and they came to Him and said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews.’ And they struck

Lent

Him repeatedly.” But there no mockery shall He know; there all shall see that He is the Son of God.

Brothers and sisters, “we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.” Our weaknesses He has known in full, and now He brings us “light in fullness of days.” Though on earth “He offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears,” now has He become “the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.” For all the tears He shed, all the scourging He underwent, all the humiliation He experienced and the death He knew, were all for our sake. “It was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured.” And having suffered in our stead for the sins of those by whom He is condemned, now He has come unto what is His own, and invites us there as well.

“He shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses.” The guilt of the nations is removed by Him who had “no guilt in Him,” and is known by all who “take refuge” in His wounds. And so, “take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the Lord”; though we, too, may be “an object of reproach” in this world of sin, He awaits us all in His heavenly kingdom. And for this we call this Friday “good.”

3. Solemnities and Feasts in Lent

Feast, February 22

Chair of St. Peter

(1Pt.5:1-4; Ps.23:1-6; Mt.16:13-19)

“On this rock I will build my Church.”

And Simon’s name is changed to “Peter”, which means “Rock”, to signify that here is the chief shepherd of the Church, upon whom the Church rests. It is he to whom Jesus gives “the keys to the kingdom of heaven.” Though all the apostles are given the power to bind and loose, it is Peter who leads – “a fellow elder” among all the elders and yet the one who speaks for all.

It is not by man’s decision that Peter is the Rock of the Church, but by the word of the Lord Himself. Just as “no mere man ha[d] revealed” to him that Jesus is “the Messiah... the Son of the living God,” so no mere man works through him today as our Pope guides the ship that is the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is led by the Church and its teachings we are guided “in right paths.” It is as we dwell in this “house of the Lord” that we are protected from all harm. “The Lord is my shepherd,” and the Shepherd of all, and into the hands of Peter and the apostles He places care for His flock.

How well this first among equals instructs his fellow shepherds today in his letter: “God’s flock is in your midst; give it a shepherd’s care.” How well does Peter answer the Lord’s call to strengthen his brothers, to see that His sheep are fed. The key pitfalls of “coercion” and “shameful profit” and “lording it over those assigned” to them, he warns them clearly against, and reminds them of “the unfading crown of glory” that awaits them. It is they who must give “courage” to the flock, they who anoint heads with oil to make the cup of the Church overflow,

Lent

even here on earth... and as they are faithful, they are Christ's own special children.

To those who still doubt the primacy of Peter and its absolute necessity, I invite you to read Scripture again and notice how often and always Peter speaks for the whole and acts for the whole body as he does today. It is to all the apostles Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" and though all may have faith, only one speaks up and answers in no uncertain terms. As he does at the first council at Jerusalem, as he did in coming to the Lord on the water, Peter speaks and leads in the power of the Spirit. The Church is one in Christ, and it has one rock it is set upon.

Solemnity, March 19

St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

(2Sm.7:4-5,12-14a,16; Ps.89:2-5,27,29,37; Rom.4:13,16-18,22;
Mt.1:16,18-21,24a or Lk.2:41-51a)

"I will be a father to him,
and he shall be my son."

It is through Joseph that Jesus is a son of David and so fulfills the promise to the king made by God: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever," for He is the heir "raise[d] up" after David "who shall build a house for [His] name." "In heaven [the Lord has] confirmed [His] faithfulness," and on earth He has made it known. And so Jesus says of God, "You are my Father, my God, the Rock, my Savior!" and we of faith join His refrain.

As with Abraham, Joseph is made foster father of Jesus not merely by physical descent from David but "through the righteousness that comes from faith." For as Abraham believed and so became "the father of many nations," so Joseph believed that it was "through the Holy Spirit that [Jesus] ha[d] been conceived" and "did as the angel commanded him and took his wife into his home,"

Solemnities and Feasts

thus becoming a father to Him who would “save His people from their sins.” Like Abraham “he believed, hoping against hope,” and like Abraham he is blessed.

But, of course, Jesus is more than the Son of Joseph; in fact, this is the great sacrifice Joseph makes. For truly he cares for Him who is more Son to the Father in heaven and Son of Man, born for all the human race. Evident this is when He is found by Joseph and Mary in the temple after three days and He asks them (a question much like those He might have been putting to the teachers of the faith): “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” and in the curious fact that His parents waited a day before journeying back to Jerusalem to look for Him, for they were “thinking that He was in the caravan” – so much a part of His people had He become.

Jesus is Son of God and Son of Man, yet “obedient to them” – Joseph and Mary – He ever was. And they were ever obedient to the dictates of the Father, that they should care for His only Son. And so Joseph, husband of Mary, a simple carpenter, fulfills in simple fashion all the Lord had set out for him. May we, too, by faith fulfill all the care we must take for Jesus, His mother, and His people.

Solemnity, March 25

Annunciation

(Is.7:10-14,8:10; Ps.40:7-11; Heb.10:4-10; Lk.1:26-38)

“Behold, I come to do your will.”

Today we celebrate the fact that the Word became flesh, that God became man through Mary and dwells among us to take away our sins. In this is fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The Lord Himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name Him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us!’” She is the Virgin; He is the Son – we are they with whom He dwells. Praise God for His grace!

Lent

Obediently Jesus takes on the body prepared for Him by the Father for all ages; humbly He bows under the Hand of God. To come among us is His delight. For He shall fulfill the prescriptions of the old law – as it is written, so shall it come to be. And in His blood poured out for our sakes, in the love He shares with us men, indeed shall be fulfilled the will of God. No longer need we wait or search in vain, for all that is written is accomplished in Him.

And Mary is, of course, the perfect reflection of the Lord's obedience; it is she in whom He is formed. As He says, "Behold, I come," she says, "Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord." As the Lord says, "In the written scroll it is prescribed for me. To do your will, O God, is my delight," His Lady says, "May it be done to me according to your word." And so by the obedience won from her by the angel, this Blessed Virgin "will conceive in [her] womb and bear a son, and [she] shall name Him Jesus"; and "the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." She in her innocence and by the fullness of grace at work in her believes the reply to her question, "How can this be?" She is assured by the miracle spoken of Elizabeth – for which this holy woman must certainly have prayed – and so the words of the angel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," are realized; and she who believes becomes the instrument of our salvation.

Brothers and sisters, "we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all." His coming among us is more than the greatest miracle; it means life for our very souls. For by His incarnation and by the sacrifice of His flesh for our sakes is effected the cleansing of our sins and the drawing up of our lives unto heaven where He eternally dwells. As He has dwelt with us, so may we now dwell with Him who has come for this purpose. Let no fear grip your heart. Consecrate yourself

Solemnities and Feasts

to Him and to His holy sacrifice. And give yourself to His Mother, that she may form you in His image, and you may know the blessed obedience which both hold, and which is itself the means of our salvation.

About the Author

At the time of this writing, James Kurt lived much as a hermit in the city – Jersey City, New Jersey – spending about six hours a day in prayer, including Catholic Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, full Rosary, Stations of the Cross, meditation on Scripture and the writings of the saints, and silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; while working another five or six hours on his writing and serving as an adjunct ESL instructor at a local university to support his vocation.

Since then he has become a “married hermit.” He and his wife Sylvia live most of the year in Sarasota, Florida, with his elderly mom. He continues to spend his days in prayer and writing (now having published 13 books), as well as in volunteer pro-life work.

Author’s Website:

www.writingsofjameskurt.org

Podcasting Site:

(featuring all the entries of this book)

www.hermitinthecity.libsyn.com

OTHER BOOKS by JAMES KURT

Remembrance of Things Present –

A mystical work seeking the presence of the LORD in the moment, where He dwells at all times.

100 pp. 2018. w/ imprimatur.

Two Books: Paradox and the Christian Faith / Hippie Convert –

The apparent contradictions of the Faith are explained for those who seek wisdom; and a member of the flower generation addresses true love and peace, in poetic form.

238 pp. 2016. w/imprimatur.

Lines of Grace: Meditations on Verses of Holy Scripture, The Stations of the Cross, and The Most Holy Rosary –

A Catholic devotional especially for the encouragement of the practice of plenary indulgence. 195 pp. 2016.

Christian Vision of the Old Testament –

Synopsis and exhortation; faith-filled overview of all books of the Old Testament as prefiguration of Jesus, with a focus on the prophetic nature of God's Word.

273 pp. 2013. w/ imprimatur.

Blessed Guilt: A Universal Conversion Story –

Extended parable on the life-giving repentance found in Jesus' blood; vaguely autobiographical but without particulars.

119 pp. 2013. w/ imprimatur.

Chapters of the Gospels –

Exposition of the four gospels, chapter by chapter; in the style of *Our Daily Bread*.

114 pp. 2009. w/ imprimatur.

The Most Holy Trinity and the Four Corners of the Universe –

A collection of writings on the Trinity and its reflection in Creation; founded upon the Shema.

300 pp. 2008. w/ imprimatur.

YHWH: Order of the Divine NAME –

On the significance of the contemplative silence that is the NAME of God, and its application to a spiritual life. 260 pp. 2008. w/ imprimatur.

Prayers to the Saints (updated 2019) –

A page of prayer to each saint on the General Roman Calendar for the United States. 230 pp. 2007 (original). w/ imprimatur.

Our Daily Bread:

Exposition of the Readings of Catholic Mass –

A page of writing for every Mass of the liturgical calendar for the Roman Rite; reflections drawn from the readings. 727 pp. 2004. w/ imprimatur.

Turn of the Jubilee Year: A Conversion Song –

Autobiographical depiction of vocation search through pilgrimage to Medjugorje and stays at a hermitage or two. 230 pp. 2004.

Songs for Children of Light: Ten Albums of Lyrics –

A white on black conceptual work with simple drawings for each song. 150 pp. 2003.

silence in the city –

Short contemplative poems; moments of divine silence in the midst of city life. 148 pp. (74 pieces). 2003.

