

THE  
LION'S TALE

*The Seasonal Magazine of St. Mark's, Mystic*

LENTEN MEDITATIONS 2022

Common  
Prayer

A JOURNEY THROUGH  
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER



# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2ND

## *Ash Wednesday*

by *Adam Thomas*

Welcome to the 2022 edition of the St. Mark's Lenten Meditations, which were written for you by a host of fellow members of the church. This year, our chosen theme is "Common Prayer," a journey through the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). The first BCP was written and compiled in 1549 by Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer. This was about fifteen years after the Church of England broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, but before the English church solidified an identity of its own. Prayer Book revisions came quickly in 1552 and 1559. The first American BCP came in 1789, a literal copy (with a few small changes) of the English 1662 BCP. The American book has been revised a number of times over the centuries, most recently in 1979, which gives us the current BCP, the red one you see in the pews at St. Mark's.

The BCP is one of the distinctive features of the Episcopal expression of Christianity (what other parts of the world call "Anglican"). Cranmer wished for non-clergy types to have a resource for praying every day and for their prayers to be "common"; that is, everyone praying from the same source each day. This Lent we are exploring the BCP with quotations from Morning Prayer, Baptism, the Holy Eucharist, and more. Meditate on these words from the prayer book. Find them inside you. Bring them from your heart to your lips. I invite you to do this as you observe "a holy Lent."

"I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word."

PAGE 265 ~ ASH WEDNESDAY INVITATION TO A HOLY LENT



# THURSDAY, MARCH 3RD

by *Susan Kietzman*

I often pray before I go to sleep. I'm in bed. It's dark and quiet. But my mind isn't quiet. What this means is my prayers are often interrupted, typically with something as mundane as an item for my grocery list or what word I'll start Wordle with in eight hours. Sometimes it's a question for Ted, starting with "Are you asleep?" (He loves this one.) My spoken prayers are more satisfactory than my silent ones and more successful, in that I finish them. As I walk along the Mystic River in the morning twilight, I think about the people in my life (or those not in my life). I open my lips and say their names into the cold air, and I ask God to be with them. This is what I call back door praise, meaning it's an ask rather than a compliment. But it's also an acknowledgement that God is loving and powerful – and will tend to those who need care and attention, with or without my prompting. Too, I routinely thank God for his presence, for the river and the trees and the pink horizon, and for my warm coat. I know God listens to me, whether I'm merely thinking or actually speaking. When I speak, though, I'm more invested in prayer and in the lives of those on my mind.

"Lord, open our lips. And our mouth shall proclaim your praise."

PAGE 80 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ INVITATORY

# FRIDAY, MARCH 4TH

by *Faith Emerich*

When does God draw near to you?

I don't know how it is for you, but for me God draws near in the early morning hours. Before anyone else in my home is awake, before the kids' lunches need to be made, before the day's schedule demands my attention—God seemingly "wills" to be found. My burdensome ideas about the way life should be headed, my thoughts and judgments of the people

I interact with — I'm able to mostly lay these aside for a short time and enter into the compassion of God. I don't know why it seems that God "wills" to be found in these early morning moments more than any other during my day, but it's none the less true that the divine is more readily accessible to my own timid heart during this time. A beautiful gift is received after soaking in the presence of the divine in the morning...my day is filled with more patience, kindness and compassion for others... and myself.

Is there a time and/or place that does something similar for you? How can you enter more fully into these moments and soak up the loving compassion of God?

Can you allow God's love to clear away judgments made against yourself and others?

"Seek the Lord while he wills to be found;

call upon him when he draws near.

Let the wicked forsake their ways

and the evil ones their thoughts;

And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion,

and to our God, for he will richly pardon."

PAGE 86 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ CANTICLE 10



# MONDAY, MARCH 7TH



"I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

PAGE 96 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ APOSTLES CREED

by Adam Thomas

This week, we are looking at the entire Apostles Creed over the course of five days. We find the creed in non-Eucharist liturgies of the church, what are called "offices": Morning and Evening Prayer and the Burial Office (funeral) in particular. The Apostles Creed was an early attempt to codify a confessional statement for Christians. The English word "creed" comes from "credo," the first word of the Latin creed, meaning "I believe." The creed is built on a Trinitarian framework: we say "I believe" three times, and each time we are talking about God in a different way.

The first way is conceiving of God as the all-powerful parent figure of the universe, the Creator. This can be scary, especially if we do not have fond or nurturing memories of our own parents. But the goal in naming God as a parent is not to bring God down to the level of our (necessarily flawed) earthly parents. The goal is much grander: to see God's presence above, below, behind, before, and within every atom in the universe. God spoke and continues to speak this creation into being. Even scientists see the handprint of a Creative Force or Intelligence at work. Albert Einstein said, "The harmony of natural law...reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection." And yet, because God made us and loves us, we find our significance.

# TUESDAY, MARCH 8TH

by Adam Thomas

"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and  
born of the Virgin Mary."

PAGE 96 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ APOSTLES CREED



Next in our Trinitarian framework is God, the Child of the all-powerful Parent, the second person of the Trinity. But while the Nicene Creed makes a lot of hay about this, the Apostles Creed jumps straight to Jesus' earthly life. We have an allusion to Luke 1, the Annunciation, where Mary accepts God's invitation to bear Jesus, the Word Made Flesh. Indeed, there are only three names in the entire creed, and Mary is one of them, so we know by that fact alone that she is important. Why? Because she said, "Here I am," to God. Her "Yes" to God echoes God's constant divine "Yes" to all of creation.

Notice the verbs in today's passage (we'll do this again tomorrow). "Conceive" and "born" show the "self-emptying" that Paul speaks of in Philippians 2: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." This human likeness is the most amazing thing about Jesus. As Christians, we believe in the both/and concept that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. If you think about it, the "fully human" part is the most incredible part, for how many people do we know that are fully human, fully themselves, fully the people God made them to be?

In *The Book of Hope*, Douglas Abrams remembers the story of Rabbi Zusha, "who was crying on his deathbed. When asked why he was crying, he said, 'I know God is not going to ask me why I was not more like Moses or more like King David. [God's] going to ask me why I was not more like Zusha.'"

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9TH

by Adam Thomas

"He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again."

PAGE 96 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ APOSTLES CREED



Most of the words of the Apostles Creed deal with the person of Jesus. Yesterday we talked about his birth, his “self-emptying.” The creed then skips all the details of his ministry and jumps right to the Passion. We have five more verbs that continue the downward trend of that emptying: suffered, crucified, died, buried, and descended. These verbs bring to mind the next part of the passage from Philippians that we mentioned yesterday: “And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.”

This death happened at the hands of the other person named in the creed: Pontius Pilate. The person of Pilate stands in for the Roman Empire he served. In effect, the creed says that Jesus was killed by an imperial machine that was in the business of oppressing the people under its rule. Jesus stood in solidarity with the other oppressed people of his land, and he made known the power of God by not fleeing in fear or fighting fire with fire. He made known God’s power by showing the eternal and infinite lengths God goes to remain in relationship with God’s creation. And that’s where the sixth verb in today’s passage comes in. He “rose.” And in rising proved that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God, as Paul says in Romans 8.



# THURSDAY, MARCH 10TH

by Adam Thomas

"He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead."

PAGE 96 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ APOSTLES CREED

The creed continues speaking about Jesus, but now we’ve turned a corner. Jesus’ death comes at the bottom of the “self-emptying.” The resurrection serves as the hinge point, and then today’s passage sends the second person of the Trinity on an ascent beyond human form. Philippians 2 addresses this as well in its next verses: “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Thus, the self-emptying of Christ followed by this ascent describes a perfect parabola. You might recall this figure from high school math: a U-shaped line built by graphing a certain type of equation. The name is telling, for it sounds an awful lot like “parable.” And indeed, Jesus is the “Parable of God,” the One whom we look toward to learn what God is like. And Jesus teaches us that God bends down to be with the lowly, that God remains present in times of unendurable pain, that God does not see death as an end of existence, that God is bringing all of creation back into right relationship with God.

# FRIDAY, MARCH 11TH

by Adam Thomas

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

PAGE 96 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ APOSTLES CREED



The last section of the Apostles Creed is a catch-all of statements important to the early church. First, we mention the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Then we move to some of the ways we experience the Spirit's presence in the life of the world. At its best, the church is a satchel that holds the seeds of the Spirit and a hand that flings those seeds widely and indiscriminately. Two words define "Church" in the creed: holy and catholic. "Holy" means the church is set apart by God for a purpose. "Catholic" means the church is universal, a single body that is one in its ideal realization, though human failing has split it time and again. (Small-C "catholic" is not the same as Big-C "Roman Catholic".)

We also experience the Spirit's presence in the communion of saints: those people who opened themselves up to God in such a profound way that their lives and the lives of their communities were changed for good. We find the Spirit's presence in forgiveness, the repairing of our relationships with one another and with God. And we finish the creed with the hope of the resurrection and a statement of eternity. These elements of the faith, along with the words we've been discussing all week, show us what early Christians deemed to be the most important elements to pass on to their posterity. But the creed is not something that asks us to sign on the dotted line and then stuff in a drawer. Rather, the creed is a living witness that we carry with us, that grows in understanding as we live it, that breathes the ability to believe into us even as we profess our belief.

# MONDAY, MARCH 14TH

by Teresa Norris

"Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten; Nor the hope of the poor be taken away. Create in us clean hearts, O God; And sustain us with your Holy Spirit."

PAGE 99 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ SUFFRAGES A



The last two lines of this snippet of prayer are familiar to us all from Psalm 51. Presented here, following a prayer for the needy and the poor, they require further reflection. Plus, these lines end a series of responsorial petitions covering a wide range of cares and concerns.

What can we discern from these four lines? The last two still stand out to me. Taken with all the previous prayers, maybe it's what we must pray for most – in order for those other longed-for needs to be met.

"Let not the needy be forgotten." Forgotten by whom? We know God won't forget them; yet we are the body of Christ. Don't we forget them as we scurry about our daily lives? Maybe we're complaining that our favorite brand of coffee isn't on the grocery shelves, while a family waters down their soup to make it stretch another day. What about "the hopes of the poor"? Who takes those away? Do we figure that's their bad luck, or blame greedy politicians? Do we overlook our role in their plight when we turn a blind eye to injustice?

I think those last two lines of this series are critical. Our hearts must be made clean and right with God, and that is only accomplished with God's sustaining Holy Spirit. All those previous prayers to God are turned on their heads as we are asked to take our part in bringing God's Kingdom here on earth. It's a tall order, and our response must be: We will, with God's help.

# TUESDAY, MARCH 15TH

by Pat Ziegler

"Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen."

PAGE 101 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2  
~ PRAYER FOR MISSION



Dear Jesus, my wounded savior, there you are, strung up in your tortured, battered body, evident for everyone to see, to jeer at as you hang, depleted, on the hard rough, splintery cross. Your beloved mother and a few friends are standing heart-broken at your feet. Nonetheless, your outstretched arms reach out in love to them, to me and to all who seek you.

As I contemplate this extremely unjust situation, I come to realize that I may be complicit in fastening you to your cross. No, I wasn't there with a hammer, but what about my sins and failures. Do they not contribute to your hanging there? As I ponder this, my heart breaks. Jesus, I love you deeply. But what about all my self-concerns? Did they shake the wooden splinters into your blistered wounds? And still, you love me. You chose your cross to teach me and many the wonder of your infinite love. Now that this dawns on me, will I choose more readily to follow you? Instead of self-centeredness, may it be generosity that I choose. Instead of annoyance may it be compassion that I reach for. Rather than fear, may I deepen my faith and trust that you are there with me. And may I diligently concern myself with the care of our fragile planet.

I remain here as you as continue to hang there, arms outstretched toward us all, reaching out with your last bit of human life. With alarm I cry out, "But how can I love the liars, murderers, thieves, racists as you do?" Between my bouts of tears, I remember that you gifted us with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. With this help, thus may I grow in patience, joy, kindness, gentleness and love. You can do naught but love us and I will cherish your gift.

I gaze up at your bloodied face, above which is stuck to your crown of thorns. As I contemplate this gift of yourself, my spirit rings out with joy and in the fullness of my height I leap into your outstretched arms where once again you hold me in your love. You always have.

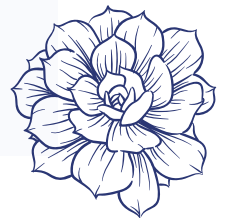
I will go with you Jesus and pray that your supreme sacrifice "...may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you." You are saving us.

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16TH

by Zachary Kohl

"Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen."

PAGE 102 ~ MORNING PRAYER 2 ~ PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM



"as may be best for us..." As I read this passage of A Prayer of St. Chrysostom, I began thinking about unanswered prayers. But my contemplation and this passage are both a reminder of what prayer really is in the Episcopal tradition. In the Catechism on BCP p. 856 it states

Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.

Prayer is a response to God. A relationship. The purpose of prayer is not to have our wishlist met. It is about being in a relationship with God, trusting that God knows what is best for us and that in by regularly responding to God we will come to understand knowledge of God's truth. Our desires and petitions may be answered, may change to align with what is best for us, or may go unanswered. Thus, in Lent I am reflecting on how I might respond to God in prayer.

# THURSDAY, MARCH 17TH

by Doug Barrett

"Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; For you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth. Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of your eye; Hide us under the shadow of your wings."

PAGE 118 ~ COMPLINE ~ VERSICLES  
AND RESPONSES



In the above I clearly hear and feel the words, "apple of your eye" and "shadow of your wings." These words give me great hope for today and tomorrow. They allow me to see God's universe as a place where we are protected if we listen carefully to His always present words.

I recently had the opportunity to go to the Florida Keys and fish with one of my sons. I've always felt that when on the ocean I connect with God and His creation in a special way. I am closer to God when I see the beauty of this land with its magnificent birds and animals. This trip was no different as we were immersed in roseate spoonbills, white pelicans by the hundreds, and all manner of birds in flight. Only God could be that creative!

When I am grudgingly slogging through a down day I look to my backyard for bluebirds, cardinals and hooded mergansers. I thank God for the creation and beauty of these creatures. He has once more helped me through those difficult times in my life – under the shadow of God's Wings.

Abundance – a poem by a friend from Maine

A poem is a gift from above,  
Given to share your heartfelt love.  
Nature beckons its wonders exceed  
Bugs, bees, butterflies  
Beneath a breathless, treeless sky-blue.  
Clouds linger lightly  
Sun dancing through.  
Blossoming flowers grace the land,  
Singing to the keeper of nature.  
All is safe in His hands.

# FRIDAY, MARCH 18TH

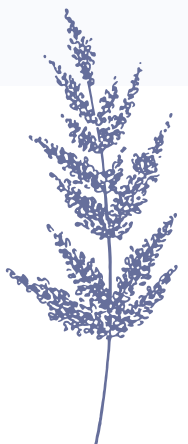
by John Kennedy

"Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen."

PAGE 118 ~ COMPLINE ~ PRAYER

How common it is to call upon God to be present with us in times of trial – sickness, grief at the loss of a loved one, despair when things are not going well or at other times in our lives when we cry for help. Less common when we give thanks to God for our well-being – happy events, recovery from illness, unexpected good fortune and the like. We somehow forget that God is with us not only at these times but always, during good times or bad or just in our everyday living and that his love engulfs us totally at all times. This passage from the BCP reminds us of that and we would do well to recall it as we live each day. God's constant presence with all of us was eloquently emphasized in one of Adam's recent sermons and it was a timely reminder to me. As one who "needs to know" everything that is going on, I tend to dwell too much on the events over which I have absolutely no control and to fret about them in the troubled World in which we live. Lent is always an important time for me to reflect on God's ever present love and care and to detach myself from much of that negativism.

Thanks be to God!



# MONDAY, MARCH 21ST

by *Alison Ives*

"I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

PAGE 307 ~ BAPTISM



Grace is received in an incredible moment where sins are forgiven and eternal life through Jesus Christ is promised. Most of us were baptized as children. Some find their way into right relationship with God. When the false gods of power, money and fame fail to deliver any lasting peace, souls look elsewhere and often are drawn to seek the power of love which has been quietly alive in their hearts all along. When a child is baptized, we are invited to renew our vows and refocus our energy on the tremendous gift we have received. God asks us to abandon the forces of evil and self interest and to reflect His love. The true power of God and the mystery that surrounds our triune God, is manifested when we affirm our belief in, and commitment to, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In renouncing the tyranny of our own willfulness, one is opened to hear, in the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, the directives of love in all we do.

This is the way to the peace which passes all understanding and the joy we can know in any given moment. We are asked, as Christians, to shine the light of that love outward into this broken world which so desperately needs it.

# TUESDAY, MARCH 22ND

by *Jake Cruthers*



"Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to  
will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and  
the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen."

PAGE 308 ~ BAPTISM

In this passage, I am touched at the hope that this young Christian will persevere. And to have the courage and the will to do it. Many believe that Christians have a life filled with faith and endless joy, yet this prayer reminds us that God knows our walk with Him won't always be easy.

We must be brave, keep the faith and run the good race. And He will be right there by our side. The joy comes in knowing that God is with us and will NEVER leave us nor forsake us. This assurance is most notable in the wonders of nature, the world He created for us. In the skies, seas, mountains, and trees. In the flowers and the animals. In the laughter, the tears, and the love.

It takes courage, wonder and love to believe in things we can not see. The joy of our faith. May we all persevere in our faith. I will, with God's help. Amen.

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23RD

by *Katy Roberts*

"You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's  
own for ever. Amen."

PAGE 308 ~ BAPTISM



I didn't really appreciate Baptism until I was a mother. I remember being asked to be a nephew's Godmother when I was in my young 20's. In my heart and mind I was really hoping for that lifelong experience of having that child look to me as he grew and I would be there for him no matter what. Fortunes turn when relationships with families are severed. As is the case with me and that young beautiful former sister and brother-in law's second child. My mother preserved many items from my brother's and my baptism. There is a small white gown that has a smock bodice. Over that adorable dress that we both wore is a small chasuble. Someone handmade it, stitched together and carefully cut out and placed two red stripes up and down each side. In the middle the christian symbol of a P with a smaller x in the middle. Both Emily and Coraline wore the same two beloved items. My pink baby book is adorned with details and pictures from the day. I may not remember the day, but everytime there is a baptism, the day is remembered in my heart and in the eyes of God. When I feel alone and scared, I use the powerful words over and over in my mind, " You are sealed by Christ's own forever."

I encourage today's meditation for you to look back on your baptism memories or your children's and the items and images you've saved over the years to recall and cherish that small anointed seal on your forehead that is still and always will be there.



# THURSDAY, MARCH 24TH

by Robert Welt

"Let us welcome the newly baptized. We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood."

PAGE 308 ~ BAPTISM



Faith, my youngest, was born in mid-December and we wanted to have her baptized before my parents returned to Florida after Christmas. Since she was still very young, we were hesitant about taking her to a crowded regular service. We asked our pastor, Fr. David Cannon, the Vicar of St. James, Poquetanuck (which a colleague once said sounds like the title of an English novel), if he would baptize Faith at a smaller, family service. Dave agreed.

Knowing that Faith's family included folks from a number of different Christian expressions, Fr. Cannon made reference to the quotation from the Prayer Book. He explained that he was not baptizing our daughter into the Episcopal Church, but welcoming her into the Christian faith.

Today when I witness baptisms, or am privileged to participate in serving on the altar during one, I remember Fr. Cannon's words. Though the words of the sacrament come from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, the baptismal candidate is not being made an Episcopalian, but is being received into the household of God.

# FRIDAY, MARCH 25TH

by Dave Cruthers



"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden."

PAGE 50 ~ MORNING PRAYER 1 ~ FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

I am a Rite 1, King James Version-kind of guy, which is why I was delighted to be assigned this passage. I do like that Father Adam uses this translation even in Rite 2, because he says more modern translations don't even use the word "magnify", which is key. The Oxford English Dictionary has as its second definition of "magnify" "praise highly, glorify" and says that definition is "archaic". It's perfect here, though.

Mary can be forgiven for being a bit unnerved by Gabriel's visit but later, she comes to understand what her mission is. After her cousin Elizabeth "heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:41); the babe, of course, being the future John the Baptist. Mary understands that God has recognized her: "He hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden", but then, in a continuation of that same verse, clearly shows that she knows what's ahead for her: "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

The story is told in a lovely way in the Basque Christmas carol, "The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came" or "Gabriel's Message." It's one of my favorite carols. Translated by the Anglican priest Sabine Baring-Gould, Mary recognizes that her life is to be changed forever:

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head "To me be as it pleases God," she said.  
"My soul doth laud and magnify his holy name." Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

# MONDAY, MARCH 28TH

by *Arlene Johnson*



"Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen."

PAGE 355 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST ~ COLLECT FOR PURITY

Each week, at the beginning of our Sunday service, we say this prayer. It is a short prayer, filled with what I feel is a powerful message to each of us. In reflecting on this year's coming Lenten season I realize how many times in my life I have spoken these words and not always paid close attention to their meaning. In quietly reading the prayer now, I find it to be a wonderful reminder of God's everlasting love.

It reminds us that God knows all that is in our hearts, both the good things and the bad things we may be ashamed of, and also all the things we wish for in our lives and the lives of those we love. We need to remind ourselves that God already knows all our frailties and imperfections and yet, in spite of them, He still loves us. As the prayer tells us He knows everything, and has always known everything about us. When we feel we are unworthy we need to remember those facts, and then try to do better in our lives by following Jesus's examples and teachings.

Rather than making a sacrifice of something for Lent this year I plan instead to try to apply Jesus's teachings in my interactions with others. In this way I feel I will be not only a better person, but also a better Christian.

# TUESDAY, MARCH 29TH

by *Ted Kietzman*

"The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_ . Glory to you, Lord Christ."

PAGE 356 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



My brother is a master teller of the humorous story. He develops the story carefully with just the right tone, inflection, and timing. It is so easy to get carried along and start laughing with him halfway through the story. Occasionally, a listener interrupts him with a correction – a story cop. You know, when someone says that was on Elm Street not Main Street, or that happened in August not September. This irritates him because the humorous story's climax does not at all depend on which street or which month. That is completely beside the point of the story and the interruption lets the air out of the narrative he was building and the real point of the story is often lost in resolving the irrelevant detail.

Adam has often said there is only one gospel, and there are four accounts of it. Occasionally, I have noticed differences between accounts and been quick to "story cop" the narrative. I can get into a courtroom lawyer argumentative mindset trying to question the credibility of the witness, and frankly, perhaps miss the whole point.

In my career as a safety leader, I often gave brief descriptions on what happened in a safety incident. Of course, I always told the truth. Even so, I realized that how I communicated would focus the attention on certain aspects that I thought needed to be improved in the future. A different leader might have selected different aspects to emphasize. We would both be telling the truth as best we could, perhaps like the gospel writers.

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30TH

by *Maggy Gilbert*

"Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;  
That they may be delivered from their distress."

PAGE 387 ~ PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE ~ FORM IV



Throughout my trip to Jerusalem, I always carried around my tiny scroll of prayers to put in the wailing wall as we never knew what day we would visit it. We were at the house of Mary, Jesus' mother, when I left my scroll of prayers by the supposed wedding water jugs. I asked God to heal those named on my paper. I went outside thinking why did I do that?

Viewing the street markings of Jesus' travels, I was stopped short.

"No!" I cried to the inner voice that said "I'm giving you the gift of compassion!" "No!" I responded. "I already have so much compassion, it hurts." That inner voice spoke again and said, "I'm giving you MY compassion." I broke down sobbing. It became clear that I'd been working from pity which removed me from truly identifying with that person/place/thing. Now I was to work from the commonality of human experiences. Not necessarily the very same experience but rather recognizing the deep underlying emotion that experience provoked.

The prisoner who had little control over her life, the hospital patient who felt abandoned. God uses my healed life experiences as touch points to draw upon to relate to the sick and suffering. This allows me to walk with them for a time, knowing God is there guiding us both.



# THURSDAY, MARCH 31ST

by *Zachary Kohl*

"We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent."

PAGE 360 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ CONFESSION OF SIN

The Confession reflects Christ's response to a lawyer as to "what is the greatest/first commandment" found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Wow! The foundation of our faith rests on only two things: love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves. Yet the simple doctrine isn't simply applied. That is why the Confession assumes, and we confess, that "we have not loved [God] with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves."

What can we do then? In repenting of our failure to love God with our whole heart and love our neighbors as ourselves, we must, as the Catechism says, have the intention to amend our lives. Therefore, my focus in Lent will be to ask each day "How can I love God today?" and "How can I love my neighbor today?" One day at a time is the most that I can ask of myself. And, inevitably, I will fail to meet these two simple commands and we will confess it together each Sunday.

# FRIDAY, APRIL 1ST

by Teresa Norris

"The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
And also with you"

PAGE 360 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2



My mother used to do this thing when we'd be saying goodbye after a visit or a phone call. "I love you," I'd say, and she'd respond. "I love you more." We'd smile at this sentiment, the point being made obvious and appreciated. This loving ritual (which I do now with my granddaughter) came to mind as I read and reflected on this familiar exchange of peace found within our Book of Common Prayer.

It's so familiar and simple we might almost overlook its importance. Placed as it is in the service, just after our joint confession of sin and subsequent assurance of God's forgiveness, it's the summation of what our fellowship with God really means.

We have been reconciled with God. With God! We, broken and sinful and woefully human, have a loving relationship with the Almighty. When the priest or prayer leader says the words "The peace of the Lord be always with you," it's not just an aspirational musing. It's fact, a reminder of a state of being we aren't just urged to hope for; we're reminded it already exists. It's ours for the taking. Then the response, "And also with you," seals it as a covenant among us all. We're saying: I pray this for you as well. I see this truth for you too.

*I love you. I love you more.*

We are in relationship with God and each other. God's gift of peace resides in God's forgiveness and love. And we reflect that love, that peace, to each other in this simple exchange. May we never overlook its importance.

# MONDAY, APRIL 4TH

by Bev Olsen



"The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.  
Lift up your hearts.  
We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give him thanks and praise."

PAGE 361 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ SURSUM  
CORDA

Sursum Corda: "Hearts up." In these lines we lift our bodies and hearts to Christ.

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.

With these words, we transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist – shift from listening to the Word to being the Body of Christ. We begin as the priest recognizes the Christ in us, and we recognize the Christ working in him and through him in the consecration of the bread.

Lift up your hearts.  
We lift them to the Lord.

We stand. Imagine as we stand: we push up from our feet, lift our arms out and up to the sky, extend the chest – lifting our lungs and heart – arching back to fill our bodies with the breath, with the life. We stand, together as one, lifting our hearts to the Lord. Sursum Corda, translated, literally means "hearts up." When we lift hearts, we lift up the wholeness of ourselves; we become vulnerable to one another and to the Christ. When we lift up our hearts, we give our hearts with the offertory. With this first step in the liturgy, WE become part of the consecration, part of the Body of Christ.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Thus we enter into the Great Thanksgiving, the Eucharist – the word itself meaning "to give thanks." We give thanks for the Christ in our community; we give thanks for the Christ in each of us; we give thanks for the gift of our hearts and breath, we give thanks for the gifts on the altar.

# TUESDAY, APRIL 5TH

by Katy Roberts



"On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

PAGE 362 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ WORDS OF INSTITUTION

This is certainly the most solemn part of any service for me. My cherished memory of this part of the service is at a time in my life when I was a single mother with two young daughters. My parents and I had become very close; they certainly were the girls only other prime caregivers. As a sat in church with them at St. Matthew's in Jamestown, RI, my mother, with Emily tucked up against her, would put her finger under each word during the Holy Eucharist to help her follow along. Sometimes she started to play with something in the pew and at almost any other time during the service, my mom didn't mind her sitting to color etc. Except for the Eucharist. My mom would point to the BCP pages and Father Kevin. Emily learned quickly, this is the time to listen. Children are a wonderful phenomena during church. I know they absorb many of the things we are saying and doing whether or not they are actively participating. But then, for my mom and now me, I feel an exception to these small momentous moments of Jesus' beloved gift. For me, it is the next greatest gift Jesus gave. His life and now he asks such a simple thing. Remember me. Remember me in the bread and wine. Gifts of his spirit that we literally absorb into our beings. This year is the 5 year anniversary of my mother's passing. Today's meditation is dedicated to her Christ-like love for her family.

# WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6TH

by Faith Emerich

"We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant."

PAGE 369 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ EPICLESIS



There is a vignette in Isaak Dineson's *Out of Africa*, in which she recounts coming upon a beautiful snake moving through the grass, its skin glistening with subtle, variegated colors. She was so taken with the snake that her servant killed it, skinned it, and made it up into a belt for her. But to her dismay, the skin which once glistened with beauty was now merely dull and grey, because all along the beauty had lain not in the physical skin, but in the quality of the aliveness.

The enactment of the holy mystery of the Eucharist each week, paints a similar picture for us but in reverse order. What appears to be just ordinary and dull bread and wine, when filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit, enlivens them into something more. Something with subtle, variegated beauty and meaning. The most powerful moment, arises when we are then invited to partake in this beauty and meaning and share it with the world we live in. The Holy Spirit, through Christ, spreads the aliveness present in the enactment of love. Love, however, doesn't limit itself to being experienced in church - church instead, reminds us to take notice of it. Love can be found any and everywhere.... as the Gospel of Thomas describes it:

*I am the light shining upon all things,  
I am the sum of everything, for from me  
Everything has come, and toward me  
Everything returns. Pick up a stone and there I am,  
Split a piece of wood and you will find me there.*

# THURSDAY, APRIL 7TH

by Ann Ragsdale

"The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving."

PAGE 364 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The simple mystery of these words  
Touches my heart; my soul  
Does not fear as it had before,  
His love has made me whole.  
At sunrise awake in communion  
Hearing his song in the wind;  
Come join the day, then shelter in Him  
As a bird to its tree at dusk.



# FRIDAY, APRIL 8TH

by Ken Knott



"Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen."

PAGE 356 ~ HOLY EUCHARIST 2 ~ POSTCOMMUNION PRAYER

Acts 2:46 reads, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." I reflected on Paul's comparison in the New Testament scripture about how the different parts of our physical bodies are like the different members of the church, and how all of those members are part of one spiritual body in Christ.

Two thousand years after Paul wrote these words, there is a tree outside my apartment that gave me a gift of a great metaphor for the Body of Christ. It stood silent, proclaiming loudly and proudly how the branches, the roots, the flowers, and the limbs worked together to create this magnificent image.

The difficulty in following the "Singleness of Heart" is that we Christians don't always agree as to "God's will." Some seem absolutely sure it is—that requiring a young student to wear a mask in school is "child abuse," or that homosexuality is "an abomination," or that government should force every woman to carry an unintended and unwanted pregnancy to term. It is one thing to sincerely have and prayerfully be led to those beliefs. It is quite another to be so absolutely certain that your beliefs are in lock-step with the Almighty in every situation and for all time, and to impose those beliefs upon all of society. How do we reconcile these two views?

# MONDAY, APRIL 11TH

by Kieran Geoghegan

"Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. Amen."

PAGE 492 ~ MARRIAGE ~ PRAYERS



How many pairs of eyes can you look into at one time? Just one, of course.

And perhaps this is why binary marriage – the marriage of one person to one person – seems so proper to us, even if there are cultures which have other arrangements and call them marriage. To each, their own, and it is not for us to condemn what we do not truly know.

We are, all of us, simultaneously strong and broken, brave and afraid, virtuous and wicked, clever and foolish, beautiful and in desperate need of rebuilding. And perhaps it is the special competency of a binary partnership to magnify our strengths and make amends for our weaknesses that we recognize in marriages that stand the test of time, and pray to find in every new marriage that the Church celebrates.

Before we have a world of unity, we must know that two people can live in something like true unity. And they can! We see it all around us. If we are very blessed, we know it in our own lives.

Where one may falter, two walking hand-in-hand may lean into the gales of life and travel forward in steadfast hope until the wind becomes fair again and carries them forward in joy. As long as one can stand, both can stand, and only the inevitable verdicts of time or tragedy can put an end to the journey.

For this blessing we pray, O Lord, in our own marriages, and in those of all we know and love. Amen.

# TUESDAY, APRIL 12TH

by Robert Welt

"Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. Amen."

PAGE 499 ~ BURIAL 2 ~ COMMENDATION



The two meditations I've been asked to write seem like bookends, the beginning and the end, Baptism and Commendation. It is as if we're saying hello and goodbye. A unifying element in both services is the presence of the Paschal candle. (As one who has had the task of lighting that candle on several occasions, even as tall as I am, I would suggest that a step stool be available. Young acolytes would certainly appreciate it. We could give it a fancy Latin name, *Paschalis cerei gradus scabellum*, so that everyone would know that it is a piece of religious furniture, sort of like the fans in the summertime.)

That candle, which is first lighted from the new fire kindled on Easter Eve, symbolizes the light of Christ. On Easter and every other Sunday, we repeat the words, "Christ is risen." We believe that the person we mourn, will also rise and be welcomed into "the glorious company of the saints in light."

In baptism the departed became a sheep of Christ's fold, and in death has gone to join the Good Shepherd. I once heard the expression that "Christians are an Easter people," a belief that is clearly spelled out in the commendation.

# WEDNESDAY,



# APRIL 13TH

by *Barbara Barrett*

"Lord, make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; where there is  
discord, union; where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope; where there is  
darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy."

PAGE 833 ~ PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS ~ A  
PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO ST. FRANCIS

Wow! This is tough stuff. Sounds like we aren't supposed to hate back or injure back or hold onto grudges or give up on faith, hope, light, and joy.

Reminds me of the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus tells his followers to love their enemies and do good to those who hate them. To do to others as we would have them do to us.

Sounds impossible unless we consider the first line of this beloved prayer attributed to St. Francis: "Lord, make us instruments of your peace." I like the lyrics in the musical rendition of the prayer of St. Francis even better: "Lord, make me a channel of your peace." When I think of a channel, I feel that I'm asking God to pour his grace through that channel right into me. Only then could I be an instrument of God's peace. Only then could I truly show love in the face of hatred, pardon when I feel injured, work for unity even as divisions around me increase. Only in that grace could I have faith in the face of doubt, hope in the face of despair, light in the face of darkness, and joy in the face of sadness.

Only through God's grace would I have a chance of living out the life for which I prayed. I know God's grace is always there. And I know it is my job to keep the channel open.

# THURSDAY, APRIL 14TH

## *Maundy Thursday*

by *Bev Olsen*

We gather this Maundy Thursday to remember the meal before Jesus is arrested and crucified. We say these words as we wash one another's feet. Jesus has gathered his disciples together for this last meal. In the midst of the anger and hatred and treachery surrounding him, he greets his disciples by washing their feet, washing away the dirtiness of the world, serving his companions who have followed him on the journey. He accepts that he is our servant, our sacrifice, our savior. Shalom, peace, both a greeting, for he welcomes these men on this evening, and a farewell; Jesus gives them his peace, his shalom, his ending and their beginning. This is not the world's peace. His is not the uneasy peace of nations and neighbors who agree to avoid conflict while sitting behind their fences. Rather this is a peace grounded in the surety and confidence of our Lord; a peace in the heart and soul that says the way forward is the only way and that God is with us. This peace settles in their heart and mind and enables them to move through the trials and tribulations that are to be faced. This is the peace of Jesus as he faces the soldiers, and Pilate, and the crowds, and the beatings and the betrayals. This is the peace of Jesus as he carries the cross to Golgotha where he is crucified. This is not an easy peace, but it is a peace in the Almighty. This is not the world's peace. This is the peace that separates Jesus from the world even as he walks in the midst of it: his acceptance of the way of the cross, making way for our salvation. This peace Jesus shares in the washing of the feet, in the breaking of the bread and the passing of the cup. This peace the disciples share with each other and pass down to us. This peace we pass in the midst of the Eucharist. With this peace we walk through a world, serving one another even in the midst of conflict and hatred and anger and war. It is not the world's peace. This peace is a certainty in our hearts in the love of God; this peace is a certainty that we are walking in the way of Jesus. This peace gives us the ability to endure and serve one another in love even in the face of extreme turmoil, even in the face of hatred. We carry this peace into the midst of the world.

"Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you."

PAGE 275 ~ MAUNDY THURSDAY



# FRIDAY, APRIL 15TH

## *Good Friday*

by *Faith Emerich*

"We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

PAGE 281 ~ GOOD FRIDAY

What does being "redeemed" mean to you? Sit for a few minutes in quiet contemplation on this.

This prayer that we're meditating on today is said to have originated with St. Francis of Assisi and was used by Franciscans for many centuries. Over time, it was incorporated into the devotion known as "Stations of the Cross" where it is recited at each of the 14 stations. Interestingly, Franciscan theology holds a different view than many long-standing atonement theories (theories which suggest the meaning and reason for Christ's death on the cross). Instead of seeing the cross as a necessary transaction to change God's angry mind about humanity, it sees the cross as the way that Christ changed humanity's mind about God (in which humanity thought themselves separate from God). One view supposes that our love can be earned and lost by God, and the other — that God's love is unconditional and never-changing. One view supposes that humanity is bad deserves punishment, and the other — that humanity has misunderstood their relationship with God and is in need of better understanding.

Theories are insightful and concise ways to convey our held beliefs, but perhaps the more interesting and weighty is the lived experiences we each have. So I am more curious to ask you...How have you experienced God in your life? How have you experienced your own shortcomings? How can we view all these things more clearly in the light of Christ's love?

# THE LION'S TALE

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Brae Rafferty  
Katy Roberts  
Jackie Stoltz  
Fred Ziegler

## MINISTERS

All members of the congregation  
The Rev. Adam Thomas, Rector  
David Tubbs, Music Director  
Faihe Emerich, Communications  
Bev Olsen, Senior Warden  
Rob Christian, Junior Warden  
Eric Bookmiller, Clerk  
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