

OUR GOD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL,  
SLOW TO ANGER AND  
ABOUNDING IN MERCY!

first  
sunday  
of LENT



San Ignacio de Loyola Parish

February 14, 2016

## REFLECTION ON THE WORD

It's no easy season, this **Lent**. Today's Gospel appears brief and simple, but the challenge it presents is neither. Jesus faces Satan in a titanic struggle between good and evil that lasts forty days. Like Jesus in Mark's Gospel, **Lent is a time when the Spirit drives us out into a "desert"**. And what happens to Jesus in the desert also happens to us.

J e s u s  
g r a p p l e d  
with being  
"tempted by  
Satan" and  
in this he  
embraced fully  
the human



reality of struggling to be faithful. Jesus left the desert ready to begin his ministry of proclaiming "the Gospel of God". Jesus had faced his own "this is the time" and said yes. **Lent is our own time to say "yes" to God.**

**Words to reflect upon: the human reality of struggling to be faithful**

**"The revolution of tenderness is that which, today, we must cultivate as a fruit of this year of mercy: the tenderness of God toward each one of us."**

— Pope Francis

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,*  
1 Timothy 2:1

**LET US PRAY TOGETHER TODAY** for the chronically ill: Sylvia Tasner, Jerry and Albert Vega, Fr. Vega, Rudy & Sonia Méndez, **Maggie and Don Maziarz.** *Let us ask God together this week to open our eyes, our ears and our hearts that we may see his face, hear his voice and love like he does.*

pray

## LIVING OUR PASCHAL MYSTERY

### The Suffering, Death And Resurrection Of Christ And Our Participation In It

The ritual act of professing our faith during Sunday Mass is no substitute for *living* it in our daily lives. When we are tested by temptations, our faith is put to the test and we are faced with a choice of who we are and how we want to live. **Lent** is a time to examine our choices. **Lent** is a time to grow in who we are.

Our desert is the demands of everyday living and our salvation is found on the cross. We don't have to go out into a desert to find temptation! But we do need God's nearness to resist it. And that God has promised us.

**Words to reflect upon: Lent is a time to grow in who we are**

## LENT

**PRAYER** We are called to rend our hearts when we pray, to break them open to the graces we are resisting. **Lent is a call to WEEP** for what we could have been but are not. **Lent is the grace to GRIEVE** for what we should have done and did not. **Lent is the opportunity to CHANGE**, what we ought to change, but have not, by allowing the Lord and his grace into our hearts through prayer.



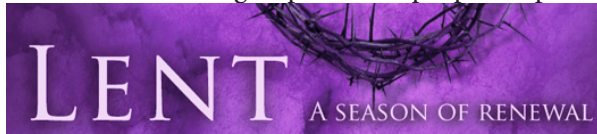
**FASTING** This tradition encourages us to RETURN TO THE LORD to open our hearts and listen to the voice of the Lord speak through the mighty Isaiah: **This is the fast that pleases me:** to break unjust fetters; to do away with the clenched fist and the wicked word; to share your bread with the hungry and shelter the homeless poor.

**ALMSGIVING** This tradition calls us to BE RECONCILED TO OUR BROTHER: to be reconciled and to reach out to do the reconciling; to open our hearts in forgiveness and love to those who have hurt us; to give up resentments; to relinquish the desire to punish; to give up all claim to revenge. In short, to DO JUSTICE AND PRACTICE PEACE.

**May the Lord ON  
THIS JOURNEY AHEAD.**

## #MercyMatters

The Vatican has announced that one Friday each month Pope Francis will be making “different gestures” of mercy as part of his personal observance of the Holy Year of Mercy. His first visit was to a homeless shelter in the heart of Rome in December; just a few weeks ago, the Pope visited the 33 residents of Bruno Buozzi Retirement Home and the 6 residents of Casa Iride, a group home for people in a persistent



vegetative state. In choosing these three institutions, the pope has wanted to highlight—in opposition to the “throwaway culture”—the great importance, the value and dignity of life in every situation.

*The Holy Year of Mercy* reminds us that mercy is not only shown by God, it should also be shown by us. We who have experienced mercy must in turn grant it to others. Mercy should be part of our DNA as Christians, something we practice 4/7. Opportunities abound for us to follow the Pope’s “mercy Fridays” example of seeking encounter right here in Puerto Rico: accompanying Maggie Maziarz in prayer as she struggles with her very serious illness; visiting Padre Vega in Santa Teresa de Jornet; offering to tutor Barrio Vietnam children in our *Vietnam Estudia* program.

## COME BACK TO ME, WITH ALL YOUR HEART!

— Joel 2: 12

## MERCY-ING

*Some suggestions for keeping to mercy during this Holy Year of Mercy:*

- If you’re sharing a treat, take the smaller portion.
- Memorize the 14 corporal and spiritual works of mercy and show your children what they mean.
- Instead of losing patience with someone online (or in person) try to hear their fear. Ask God for what Solomon asked for: “an understanding heart”.
- Offer to drive an elderly person to mass.
- Recall a time you were not given a benefit of a doubt, and extend one to someone else.

**God is “mercy within mercy within mercy”.**

—Thomas Merton

## Pope FRANCIS:

*Dear brothers and sisters, how greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!*

## THE POPE’S MESSAGE FOR LENT

God’s mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbour and to devote ourselves to what the Church’s tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. On such things will we be judged. For this reason, I expressed my hope that “the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy” (ibid., 15).  
- See more at: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/23218/popes-message-for-lent-2#sthash.KXIVe2WT.dpuf>

## TAKING UP LENT

**Lent** is the time the Church gives us to let the Spirit lead us into the desert of our hearts, return to our baptismal promise to put on Christ and listen to his voice, so to be enveloped by God’s mercy. We do penance to rid ourselves of the false voices and apparent goods that keep us from seeing Jesus, hearing his voice and living his presence more clearly.



**Listen for the voice of God this Lent.** Ask where am I blinded by apparent good and the voice of the evil one? **Enter into dialogue with God in prayer and with those who live God’s merciful love.** As Pope Francis has said, “Dialogue is very important for our own maturity, because in confronting another person, confronting other cultures and also confronting other religions in the right way, we grow; we develop and mature.”

**Listen to the Spirit** this Lent to taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

**Listen deeply.**

## —THE LITURGICAL CORNER

On Ash Wednesday, we heard “Return to me with your whole heart” proclaimed. We are prodigal children who have drifted away. We need to be back where we belong, in the arms of a loving father.

And so we begin the return: **Lent, the 40-day walk back.** **Lent** is a penitential season, a time for doing without. Ashes are just the beginning.

Our music becomes simpler, our liturgies plainer. The Gloria is gone. We fast, we pray. We remember the ashes. But the other side of that metaphor, of course, is what causes something to be turned into ash: fire. Don’t forget the fire. Don’t ignore that blazing light of love that burns all during Lent. “If you become what you were meant to be, you will set the world on fire”. (*St. Catherine of Siena*)