The Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 22

Today’s long reading from the ninth chapter of the Gospel according to John tells how Jesus gave sight to a man who had been born blind. Jesus bestows the gift of physical sight so that the man born blind may receive the spiritual sight which comes from faith.

At the conclusion of the reading, Jesus takes the Pharisees to task for their lack of vision. How could they know and keep all the precepts of the Law yet not recognize the One who had come to fulfill that Law?

Are you and I in a similar situation? We may know a lot about our faith, but do we know Jesus in a personal way? Are we so busy doing the work of the Lord that we have little or no time to allow Jesus to work his love in our hearts?

Brothers and sisters:
Once you were darkness
but now you are light in the Lord.

Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness
and righteousness and truth.

Ephesians 5:8-9

Tuesday, March 24
Matthew 18:21–35

When Jesus told Peter to forgive seventy-seven times (or was it seventy times seven times), he was telling Peter that God’s forgiveness is without limit. How about us? Are we merciful like the Father? Or do we carry grudges against those who used to be close to us?

Have we looked into our hearts and asked God to help us forgive those who have wronged us?

When we pray the Our Father, do we really mean it when we recite the words, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”?

Wednesday, March 25
The Annunciation of the Lord

We put on hold our readings from Matthew in order to reflect upon an event which changed the course of human history: the divine Son of God took on our human nature when he became the Son of Mary.

As a result of the Incarnation, human nature no longer serves as a stumbling block to holiness. Rather, human nature has become the means to holiness.

When Mary said “Yes” to the angel, she did not yet know what that “Yes” would ultimately require of her. Likewise, when you and I say “Yes” to a personal relationship with Jesus, we do not know what our “Yes” may ultimately require of us.

However, one way or another, our “Yes” ultimately will lead us to the cross, just as it led Mary there.

Monday, March 23
Matthew 18:10–20

The mercy of God is beyond our imagination. How against human logic is the idea of leaving ninety-nine to go and search for one! God would go to any length to bring a lost one back to his flock.

In what ways have you ever felt like a lost sheep? How did God search you out and bring you home?

Consider occasions when you rejoiced over someone else who wandered away from the Lord, but whom God sought out, reconciled, and brought back.
Thursday, March 26
Matthew 24:1–14

From now until the end of Lent, our readings from Matthew require a different perspective. Every passage which we read prior to today portrays Jesus on his way to Jerusalem.

Jesus has now entered Jerusalem. He heard the “Hosannas!” He drove the money-changers out of the Temple. The bitterness of his enemies is sharper than ever. He knows that the time for sacrifice is near.

Remember this context as you enter into Matthew during the days ahead.

Who is not frightened by reading these verses? Who is not filled with fear upon hearing the details of the coming time of tribulation?

We must not be dismayed over these images because a loving God watches over his faithful ones.

Do not be discouraged by what is happening in our world. Do not fall into “doom and gloom” with every report of calamity in the world or every example of sinful behavior glorified in the media.

God’s family has nothing to worry about so long as we stay focused on Christ and remain faithful to him.

Might we suffer? Surely we will. But instead of seeking some other path, let us accept where God has planted us and have confidence in his plans.

So here is our challenge:
Are our present trials causing us to become hard of heart, or are we surrendering ourselves to the Lord so that these trials may be an occasion of grace?

When people of little or no faith encounter us, do they see “doom and gloom,” or do they recognize the joy which comes from knowing that the Son of God sacrificed himself for us?

Friday, March 27
Matthew 24:15–35

He who soon will wear a crown of thorns is also the One who will come on clouds of glory. Rejoice!

Indeed he will come to reward our faithfulness and our perseverance. For our part, the suffering which we face takes on meaning as we become one with the suffering of Jesus.

Our challenges today:
Do we take for granted that we are one of God’s elect, or do we take seriously our mission to love the Lord and to serve others until Jesus comes again?

Saturday, March 28
Matthew 24:36–51

Are we the Lord’s faithful servants?
Our Master is long in coming. It is hard to stay focused in the midst of all the lures and temptations which surround us. Those temptations can cause us to turn away from him who is light to the darkness of sin and despair.

We ask: When is Jesus coming again? Why must we and those we love endure so much?
Hope fills us with holiness.

Jesus said that he is coming again, and he will. Let us not become sloppy, like the unfaithful servant. Let us strive for faithfulness in our trials, and let us hope in the Lord’s promise.

Our challenge today:
What temptation is most drawing you away from a deeper personal relationship with Jesus?