



parish newsletter

First Sunday of Lent (Year B) | 21 February 2021

Reflecting on the Gospel



St. Oscar Romero said, "Aspire not to have more, but to be more." These powerful words provide the perfect framework for a conversion oriented Lenten experience. God is giving us this Lenten sign to stop

being concerned about what you have and focus on who you are. This requires that we create a desert space and listen more attentively for God to reveal His presence. It is all so wonderfully simple

on the one hand and so incredibly challenging on the other. The message is simple: love God, neighbour, and self. Those simple words make great sense, but we struggle translating them into real-

ity. Our attachments, compulsions, obsessions, addictions, routines, and busyness all anchor us to the "idol of the self," keeping us mired in our compulsive need for self-aggrandisement. It's not about us!

God vowed, long ago, to nurture, sustain and protect the relationship He has with His people. He called us into being, nurtures us in being, and sustains us in being. Without the Loving Divine Presence, all life would cease. Once we slow down a bit and clear away some of the clutter, we can see how the journey of our life is unfolding. We can see what brings us in and out of tune with God's love and how we can better imitate God's loving fidelity in our relationship with Him. In short, we will see our myopic shortsightedness and figure out how we can better share the Divine Fire within with others. Lent isn't just about giving stuff up for forty days and indulging again at Easter. We need to push things much farther and wrestle with the question of how we can be more. "Being more" means becoming more fully alive and in touch with the holiness of life and the divinity that lives in and empowers all beings and things. It is realising that the "quality" of our presence is crucial to being an effective witness and herald of God's unconditional love. The illusion we have bought into causes us to believe that the wrong things and systems matter. We tirelessly fight to keep things the way they are, to return to the former ways of doing things or restore some nostalgic fantasy memory of "life in the good old days." Lent isn't about maintaining what we have or returning to something that is gone. It's about becoming something new. It's about being more focused, centred, convicted, and grounded so that we can be a person who truly loves and treasures being made in the image of God. The secret to Gospel living is not found in accumulating anything for ourselves, even merit points for heaven. Gospel living means learning how to live with less so that others can live with more. The thought of permanently giving something up makes us feel uncomfortable. Truth often does.

Everyday Stewardship

Tracey Earl Welliver, MTS

Have you ever taken a nature walk? Have you leisurely strolled through a forest or field, with no real destination in mind and your only objective being receptivity to and observation of all God's creation?

Sometimes, Scripture readings can feel like a nature walk. All of salvation history plays out against the backdrop of the natural world, with all elements of God's creation — plants and animals and the dust of the earth itself — turning in a supporting performance. How about Jesus in the hot and dusty desert, tempted, living "among the wild beasts?" Noah departed from his ark with the animals he rescued, observing God's sign in the very clouds of the sky. Even God Himself, offering us salvation from original sin through the waters of baptism.

How often do we remember that God speaks to us

through all of His creation, even in the unlikeliest suspects?

Let's go back to the nature walk. It sounds like a lovely way to pass an afternoon, amongst wildflowers and butterflies, but don't forget the beating hot sun, mosquitoes, and threat of rain on the horizon. Remember, we're not in heaven yet. Here on earth, God may be present in His creation, but that doesn't mean it's always easy to endure.

Lent is, essentially, a time to listen for the voice of God in places we may not expect: the mild irritations you experience when you're craving the chocolate you gave up, or the dull pangs of hunger during the Ash Wednesday fast. It's a golden opportunity to see the divine hand in all of creation, even those unlikely suspects.

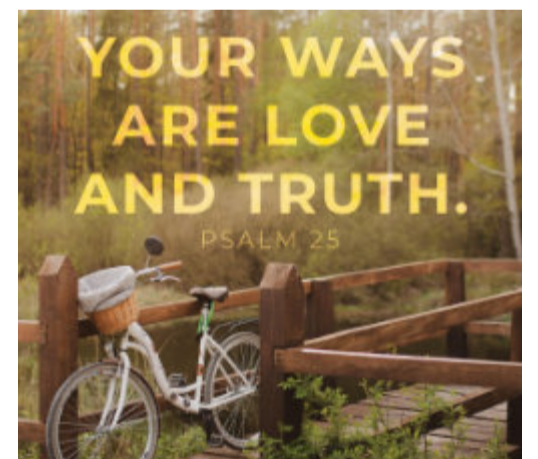


Live the Liturgy

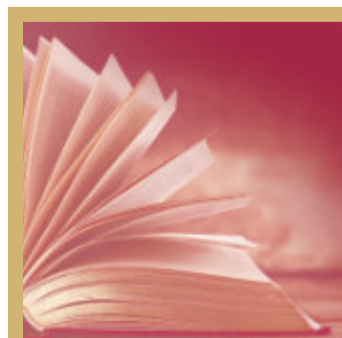
Inspiration for the Week

Throughout history God has given His people signs. Our season of Lent offers us God's sign that it is time to stop the ordinary routines of our lives, create some desert space, and listen more attentively for God to reveal His presence. We are asked to unplug from our attachments, compulsions, obsessions, addictions, routines, and busyness to clear the slate and take stock in who we have become. We are asked to remember the ancient

sign of God's covenant with humanity in which He vowed to nurture, sustain, and protect the relationship He has with His people. Once we slow down a bit and clear away some of the clutter, we can see how the journey of our life is unfolding. We can see what brings us in and out of tune with God's love and how we can better imitate God's loving fidelity in our relationship with Him. Even though some good solid self-denial is the order of the day, greater happiness and wholeness will be the fruit of our labours. Pleasant journey through the desert!



Repent and believe the Good News.



First Reading

I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood. (Gn 9:11)

Psalm

Your ways, Lord, are faithful and love for those who keep your covenant. (Ps 31)

Second Reading

Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. (1 Pt 3:18)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Alleluia!

Gospel

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for 40 days, tempted by Satan. (Mk 1:12-13)

Masses this Week

21	FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT	Gn 9:8-15/Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9 [cf. 10]/1 Pt 3:18-22/Mk 1:12-15 10.30 Mass St Mary's Kitty & Harry Garraghan (RIP) 17.00 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Liz Rodwell
22	Chair of St Peter, Apostle	1 Pt 5:1-4/Ps 23:1-3a, 4, 5, 6 [1]/Mt 16:13-19 12.05 Mass St Mary's Jeanie McCarron (RIP)
23	Tuesday St Polycarp	Is 55:10-11/Ps 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19 [18b]/Mt 6:7-15 12.05 Mass St Mary's In thanksgiving (Albert)
24	Wednesday	Jon 3:1-10/Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19 [19b]/Lk 11:29-32 12.05 Mass St Mary's Veronica Whiting (RIP)
25	Thursday	Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25/Ps 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8 [3a]/Mt 7:7-12 12.05 Mass St Mary's Gerry Barry (RIP)
26	Friday	Ez 18:21-28/Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8 [3]/Mt 5:20-26 12.05 Mass St Mary's Anthony Foran (RIP)
27	Saturday	Dt 26:16-19/Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8 [1b]/Mt 5:43-48 11.00 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Sunderland Port Family 18:00 Vigil Mass St Cecilia's David Lawson (RIP)
28	SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT	Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18/Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19 [9]/Rom 8:31b-34/Mk 9:2-10 10.30 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish 17.00 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Sunderland SVP

MINISTRY TO THE SICK

Christopher



Eileen Brook
Mary Therese Grainger
John Small Hepple

If you would like to be added to our prayer list, please email or call the parish office.



Questions for the Week

First Reading: God promises Noah to use a “bow in the clouds” (a rainbow) as a sign and symbol of His divine pledge to never again allow a world-wide flood to devastate the earth. This is the Bible’s first recorded covenant between God and humanity. What do you think of when you see a rainbow?

Second Reading: Peter teaches that Jesus preached to both the living and the dead — those dead dating back to the days of Noah — and connecting us through baptism. What do you find intriguing about this idea?

Gospel: We hear about Jesus’ temptation in the desert and his inaugural gospel message to those living in Galilee. Jesus saw repentance as necessary to believe his good news. As we begin the Lenten journey, what aspects of your life require repentance?



Why do we do that?



Question: Does it matter what leg you kneel on when genuflecting?

Answer: Genuflection is an act of devotion that literally means “to bend the knee.” For many Catholics, it’s an almost automatic gesture that we perform

before entering our pew or row of seats at Mass. But, like many of the symbols and gestures of our faith tradition, genuflecting can also be an invitation for deeper reflection.

The practice of “bending the knee” is an ancient way of recognising the presence of someone greater than we are. It has been said that the practice dates back to the time of Alexander the Great, but it became a common part of etiquette in the royal courts of the Middle Ages. From throne rooms and palaces, it was a small step to genuflecting, becoming part of the devotional lives of Christians who used this secular gesture as a way of recognising the presence of the One who is King of Kings, especially in the Eucharist. In our tradition, although many have been taught or prefer to genuflect by placing their right knee on the ground, there is no prescribed way to genuflect. This is especially important to keep in mind if physical limitations or age make certain movements difficult for us.

Today, Catholics are asked to genuflect in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament (whether in the tabernacle or exposed on the altar during Eucharistic adoration). So, while it has become second nature to genuflect before entering your seat in church, we should pay attention to where the Blessed Sacrament is kept in each church or chapel we visit, and genuflect in the direction of the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. In churches or chapels in which the tabernacle is in a separate space, we are invited to simply bow toward the altar.



News & Announcements

Lent 2021

Join us online every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for the Rosary, Adoration and Stations of the Cross. See our parish website for details and to download the booklets so you can pray along with us.

We will post the prayers in the morning of their respective days and you can follow along whenever you get the chance during the day. Even though we may still be physically separated, we can still join as a parish for our Lenten devotions.

Rewiring of St Mary’s

On Monday, 22 February, we are beginning the rewiring project in St Mary’s that will also involve the installation of a new lighting system. For years the church has had poor lighting and it’ll be good to have that remedied.

Flock Notes

Happy Easter, Happy Christmas ...but Happy Lent? Can you really say that? I mean, with all that fasting and abstaining and thinking about sin, is Lent a happy time? Well, I suppose it depends where we put our focus.

If for the next forty days we focus solely on our sinfulness then, I agree, it isn’t going to be a very happy time. It’ll be quite a miserable time and wishing ‘Happy Lent’ will ring hollow.

However, is the main focus of the next forty days actually our sins and general sinfulness? I don’t think so.

Lent is a celebration of God’s love. It is a celebration of his mercy and his forgiveness. Contemplating that for the next forty days should put a smile of the face of the most hardened sinner! And that is the point of Lent. It isn’t about turning ourselves inward, but opening ourselves up and allowing the warm, bright, healing light of God to shine into the cold, dark, musty recesses of our hearts.

Of course, to do that means I need to be conscious of my sinfulness and my need for forgiveness; but if I stop there I’m missing the point.

In today’s Gospel we see how the devil tempts Jesus in different ways. It’s the same for us. He wants to keep

Like all major works, this one will come with some disruption. The church will remain open on weekends and for most of the weekdays; however, on some occasions we might have to decamp to the parish hall.

However, until the work is completed in about six weeks’ time, there will be no funerals in St Mary’s, they will all be held at St Cecilia’s.

Additionally, because of the requirement to keep the church clean and COVID-safe for both worshippers and the electricians, certain areas might be blocked off and you may have to sit in different places. Please follow the guidance of the stewards when visiting the church.

Wear Walking in the Light of God

Download our prayer walk from our parish website or on our Facebook page. We also have some printed copies available at the back of church and invite God for a walk with you from the sculpture of the sun to Roker beach stopping for prayer at each of the planet markers.

us focused inward, on ourselves and on our sinfulness. He wants to keep us feeling hopeless with no way out.

Yes, we are sinners, yes we all stand in need of God’s mercy. The Good News is that God readily gives it any time we turn to him in penance and ask. That’s the Good News of Lent!

Lent is a time of grace and grace is just shorthand for ‘the working of the Holy Spirit’ The words of absolution in confession say that the Holy Spirit was ‘sent among us for the forgiveness of sins’. Here’s to forty days of cooperating with the Spirit! Happy Lent!



Our Lady of Mercy Parish • 27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ • (0191) 567 5354 • sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk
www.sunderlandcatholic.com

St Mary’s Church • 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ • **St Cecilia’s Church** • Ryhope Road • Sunderland • SR2 7TG

Fr Christopher Hancock MHH JCD, Parish Priest • christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com

Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHH, Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk

Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon

Canon Alexander Barras, Priest in Residence



A parish of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Reg Charity 1143450

