

## Fourth Sunday of Lent: Sunday, March 14, 2010

### Scripture:

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us.

(2 Cor. 5:17-20)

### Quote:

The members of the Church, as members of society, have the same right and duty to promote the common good as do other citizens. Christians ought to fulfil their temporal obligations with fidelity and competence. They should act as a leaven in the world, in their family, professional, social, cultural and political life. They must accept their responsibilities in this entire area under the influence of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. In this way they testify to the power of the Holy Spirit through their action in the service of people in those things which are decisive for the existence and the future of humanity. While in such activities they generally act on their own initiative without involving the responsibility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in a sense they do involve the responsibility of the Church whose members they are.

World Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971), no. 38

### Reflection:

We are called to be renewed in Christ during this season of Lent, so we can renew the world, acting as leaven in society. We are called to be completely open to the Holy Spirit so we can be empowered to be bold in our love of neighbor and creative in new ways of living as a global community.



### Prayer:

O God, give us a thirst for renewal in our own lives so we may engage fully in co-creating the Kingdom of God. Give us a taste of what it may mean to be made new, to see new possibilities for justice and to feel a new passion to love our neighbors.

### Fasting:

- Identify one habit or way of thinking that holds you back from new ways of seeing or treating others. Pray to let old patterns go.

### Almsgiving:

- Sacred Space is an online prayer site produced by the Irish Jesuits. The site provides beautiful daily prayer meditations and reflections in the Jesuit tradition.

Website:

**Sacred Space**

Address:

[www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)

## Monday, March 15, 2010

### Scripture:

Thus says the LORD:  
Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;  
The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind.  
Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness  
in what I create;  
For I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight;  
I will rejoice in Jerusalem and exult in my people.

(Isaiah 65:17-18)

### Quote:

The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to people to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal kinship and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of people and their very salvation demand it.

*World Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* (1971), no. 36*

### Reflection:

Recognizing Christ, hearing his message and seeing his face in the global community is our challenge. As the people of God, we are called to proclaim justice amid the complexities of the economic and social structures of our time. As we struggle to fully recognize and understand injustice, we need to trust that grace will help us find the words we must proclaim to the world.



### Prayer:

Help us to recognize you in this place, in this time, O Lord. Grace us with a longing for vision. Give us eyes to see, give us ears to hear, and give us a voice to proclaim your justice.

### Fasting:

- Today, fast from ingratitude and take time to count the blessings in your life. Express your gratitude to those around you.

### Almsgiving:

- The Caroline Center is a place for women to gain not only skills needed for economic independence, but a place for nurturing dreams and fostering hope. Learn about the work of this remarkable outreach center.

Website:

**The Caroline Center - School Sisters of  
Notre Dame**

Address:

[www.caroline-center.org](http://www.caroline-center.org)

## Tuesday, March 16, 2010

### Scripture:

One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk." Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked. (John 5:5-9)

### Quote:

Yes, even today the Lord hears the cry of the multitudes longing for joy, peace, and love. As in every age, they feel abandoned. Yet, even in the desolation of misery, loneliness, violence and hunger that indiscriminately afflict children, adults, and the elderly, God does not allow darkness to prevail. In fact, in the words of my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, there is a "divine limit imposed upon evil," namely, mercy ("Memory and Identity," pp. 19ff). It is with these thoughts in mind that I have chosen as my theme for this Message the Gospel text: "Jesus, at the sight of the crowds, was moved with pity" (Matthew 9:36).

Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for Lent* (2006)

### Reflection:

Mercy, Shakespeare tells us, is like the gentle rain that falls from heaven to the earth below. Mercy and healing, we have learned, can occur even in the midst of enormous suffering, as we know from stories of the Holocaust and other terrible tragedies. This reminds us that we have always have role to play in not allowing the darkness to pervail. We must become the mercy of God to those in darkness.



### Prayer:

Open us to a deep sense of your love for every person who suffers, O God. Let us study the ways of mercy, of compassion, of healing. Let us be the light in the darkness, the water to a parched throat, the gentle hand that offers a human connection.

### Fasting:

- As you listen to today's news on the radio, web or TV and hear news stories that reveal the suffering of people in your city and around the world, take some time to pray for them and bring their needs for hope and healing before God.

### Almsgiving:

- Catholic Relief Services puts a human face on the suffering of people around the world. Read about the work of CRS--as Christ's hands in the world today--as they work to bring hope and restoration to people in need around the world.

Website:

**Catholic Relief Services**

Address:

[www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)

## Wednesday, March 17, 2010

### Scripture:

Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I answer you, on the day of salvation I help you, To restore the land and allot the desolate heritages, Saying to the prisoners: Come out! To those in darkness: Show yourselves! Along the ways they shall find pasture, on every bare height shall their pastures be.

They shall not hunger or thirst, nor shall the scorching wind or the sun strike them; For he who pities them leads them and guides them beside springs of water.

I will cut a road through all my mountains, and make my highways level. See, some shall come from afar, others from the north and the west, and some from the land of Syene. Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth, break forth into song, you mountains. For the LORD comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted.

(Isaiah 49:8-114)

### Quote:

If one contends, as we do, that the right of every fetus to be born should be protected by civil law and supported by civil consensus, then our moral, political and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker. Such a quality of life posture translates into specific political and economic positions on tax policy, employment generation, welfare policy, nutrition and feeding programs, and health care. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways. We cannot urge a compassionate society and vigorous public policy to protect the rights of the unborn and then argue that compassion and significant public programs on behalf of the needy undermine the moral fiber of the society or are beyond the proper scope of governmental responsibility.

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *A Consistent Ethic of Life: An American-Catholic Dialogue* (1983)

### Reflection:

The reading from Isaiah mentions several categories of oppressed persons: the imprisoned, the hungry and thirsty, and those in many forms of darkness. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin reminds us that there is no issue nor category of persons that we can ignore if we want to work for justice. Our faith requires a wholistic response to everything that diminishes the dignity of anyone's life.

### Prayer:

God of Life, help us to grow more consistent in our respect and reverence for all life. Strengthen our commitment to mercy and justice for all. Help us to recognize the many ways the seamless garment of life must be cherished and revered at every stage of life. May we affirm in others the gift of life you have so generously given to us.

### Fasting:

- Today, fast from the ways in which our culture promotes a culture of death - fast from violent TV shows and movies, fast from the use of violent metaphors, fast from treating others in demeaning ways. Reflect on the sacredness of life in every person at every stage of life.

### Almsgiving:

- The Catholic Update on the Consistent Ethic of Life recognizes that all life is sacred from womb to tomb. Learn more about the Consistent Ethic of Life by reading this clear and helpful summary article.

Website:

**A Consistent Ethic of Life**

Address:

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0798.asp>

## Thursday, March 18, 2010

### Scripture:

I see how stiff-necked this people is," continued the LORD to Moses. "Let me alone, then, that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them. Then I will make of you a great nation." But Moses implored the LORD, his God, saying, "Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze up against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and with so strong a hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent he brought them out, that he might kill them in the mountains and exterminate them from the face of the earth'? Let your blazing wrath die down; relent in punishing your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self, saying, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.'" So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.

(Ex. 32:10-14)

### Quote:

Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men. And s/he will be this all the more perfectly, the more closely s/he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.

Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), no. 164

Christians' specific contribution to justice is the day-to-day life of individual believers acting like the leaven of the Gospel in their family, their school, their work and their social and civic life.

World Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* (1971), no. 49

### Reflection:

As a result of his intimate experience with God, Moses was empowered to be a passionate agent for transformation. Lent is a time to prepare ourselves to be open to the power and passion of God so we will be empowered to be into "a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven" in the global community.



### Prayer:

God of light, center of love, empower our weak spirits so we nurture the smallest spark inside us and become a light to the world. Ground us in your passion, grow us in your heart, so we can speak truth to power, as Moses did. Call us by our true names so we can realize how we have been blessed and chosen by you.

### Fasting:

- Today, refrain from a lack of faith in your abilities to make a difference. Choose to focus on the potential God gifted you with and feel gratitude for this potential.

### Almsgiving:

- The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development is the British equivalent of Catholic Relief Services. They have beautiful reflections for your consideration. Visit the website and click on "Worship Resources" for prayer resources to nurture your soul.

Website:

**The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development**

Address:

[www.cafod.org.uk/](http://www.cafod.org.uk/)



## Friday, March 19, 2010

### Feast of St. Joseph

#### Scripture:

It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes from faith. For this reason, it depends on faith, so that it may be a gift, and the promise may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not to those who only adhere to the law but to those who follow the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist. He believed, hoping against hope, that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "Thus shall your descendants be."

(Romans 4:13-18)

#### Quotes:

The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful, God, humankind's judge on the last day.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, #841.

The history of relations between our two communities has been complex and often painful, yet I am convinced that the "spiritual patrimony" treasured by Christians and Jews is itself the source of the wisdom and inspiration capable of guiding us toward "a future of hope" in accordance with the divine plan.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to a delegation of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations*, June 9, 2005

#### Reflection:

In this polarized world, we often forget that Islam and Judaism share a common early history with Christianity; Abraham is the father of us all. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, it is only in reconciling and acting in communion with our sisters and brothers of other faiths that we can create a "future of hope."



#### Prayer:

God of Abraham, help us to see and recognize our universal kinship with all members of the global community. Open our hearts to the needs of all people for respect, for peaceful dialogue and religious freedom. Make us mindful of those who suffer religious persecution and physical danger because of the beliefs they hold.

#### Fasting:

- Fast from attitudes that exclude and label others because of differences. Work to build bridges of understanding through dialogue and respect.

#### Almsgiving:

- St. Anthony Messenger has a feature article on the commonalities between Christianity, Islam and Judaism. These faiths all share beliefs in the same God.

Website:

**St. Anthony Messenger**

Address:

[www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/](http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/)

[Apr2002/Feature2.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Apr2002/Feature2.asp)

Jane Deren

Education for **JUSTICE**  
[www.educationforjustice.org](http://www.educationforjustice.org)



## Saturday, March 20, 2010

### Scripture:

**O Lord, my God, in you I take refuge.**

Do me justice, O LORD, because I am just,  
and because of the innocence that is mine.  
Let the malice of the wicked come to an end,  
but sustain the just,  
O searcher of heart and soul, O just God.

Psalms 7:9-10

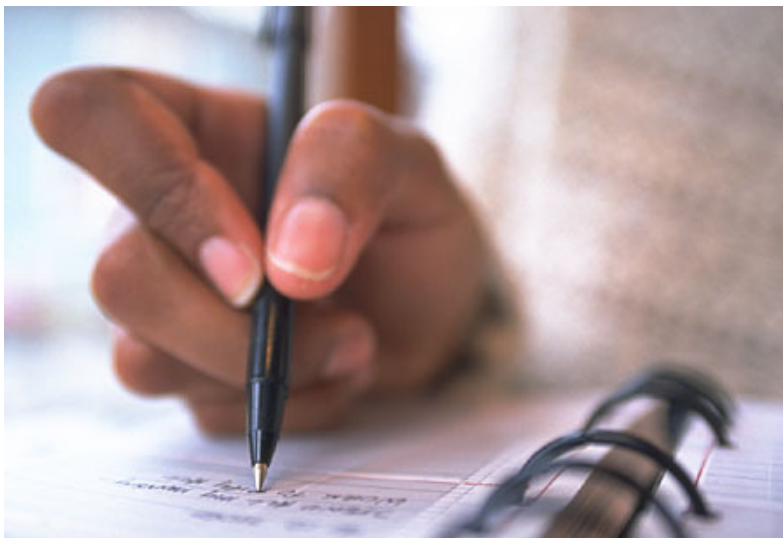
### Quote:

Christians however have something specific to say and do in the interpretation and accomplishment of history. For Christians, in fact, interpreting history through the signs of the times means asking themselves whether events, accomplishments and currents of opinion that make themselves felt represent not an enrichment of human nature, which is always perfectible and which completes itself by developing in time. Since human nature is created by God, the question arises in this form for Christians: is the new event the image or the caricature of human nature? The method of the signs of the times, therefore, consists in the first place in discovering correspondences and resemblances.

Cardinal Roy, *Reflections on "Pacem in Terris,"* no. 153

### Reflection:

Responding to the call to justice is an ongoing task, as is the work of searching the signs of the times in order to respond appropriately. These activities contribute to our own human development as well as to the work of justice. Indeed, we create our own identities as children of God as we work in community to ensure that everyone has the resources to fully realize their human dignity.



### Prayer:

O just God, sustain us as we search for your signs in the unfolding of human history. Sustain us as we struggle with our identities as just humans, and help shape our hearts and souls so we can realize our potential to do your will in these difficult times.

### Fasting:

- Today, use the power of your pen to make a difference through advocacy by sending a letter to a member of congress on an issue of significance to you.

### Almsgiving:

- Unleash the power of your pen and learn how to write an effective advocacy letter from Network Catholic Justice Lobby. Follow the latest legislative action alerts.

Website:

**Network Catholic Social Justice Lobby**

Address:

[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)