



LENTEN REFLECTIONS

FROM ST GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL

MARCH 5 - APRIL 19, 2025

ABOUT THESE REFLECTIONS

This series of reflections is meant to accompany your own daily observations on the 40 weekdays and 6 Sundays from Ash Wednesday to Easter, 2025. For each day, the appointed readings in the Revised Common Lectionary of the Book of Alternative Services appear at the head of the page. The reflection for that day, by a parishioner of St George's, follows. Some writers have elected to concentrate on one of the readings; others have written about more than one, and still others have written not so much on the readings as on their own thoughts in response to the readings. I hope that the variety of approaches will be useful to you as readers.

The reflections, varying greatly in length, are different in form and substance, for the contributors were given no guidelines about the nature and content of their reflections, no directions about how they should approach the task, nor any agenda about the whole project. Nor has editing attempted to create a uniform style in the reflections.

It has not been intended that the reflections should be anything other than the personal thoughts of the individuals who wrote them. Editing has been severely minimal. The writers may use different translations of the Bible, and they sometimes quote translations which will be different from those that readers use. They have sometimes consulted various background sources and interpretive materials to which readers will not have access or they have used other reading to inform their writing. Each reader will decide how best to use the reflections in relation to each one's own prayer and Bible reading.

Unsurprisingly, many of the Reflections are coloured by events in our secular world, as we face the many interrelated issues brought about by the actions of the newly-elected President of the United States. Some writers have explicitly referred to some of these matters, while others have preferred to leave such reference implicit.

On a personal note, I want to express my deep thanks to all who have written Reflections. Some have written for many annual editions of the collection; others are new this year. All have given us much to consider in the course of our Lenten journey. I also want to declare my gratitude to Matt Fraser for making the Reflections available electronically as well as in print. This year, in addition to having the full collection available on the Cathedral website there has been the option of receiving each day's reflection by email. This innovation was suggested by Warden Jann van Vugt and executed by Matt.

-Phil Rogers

ASH WEDNESDAY

Psalms 32, 143; Jonah 3:1-4:11; Hebrews 12:1-14

Pursue peace with everyone and the holiness
without which no one will see the Lord. – *Hebrews 12:14*

The 12th chapter of Hebrews follows one of my favourite passages in all of scriptures, in which the author lists out all the many generations of heroes of the faith from before the time of Jesus and all the heroic ways they demonstrated their virtues in the face of persecution and trouble. That passage, which rehearses all the names of the greats, lists all the ways which faith has availed the mighty acts of God, and yet it was not to these heroes that the revelation of Jesus had come. They managed to be heroic before the fullness of what God was doing. It is being surrounded with this cloud of witnesses that makes us lean into our race—the way that God has planned for us.

God's way in our lives is not always going to be smooth or easy. The larger portion of this passage reminds us that God is active, and that activity sometimes feels like chastisement, but rather it is the discipline of a loving father. Being strong in the Lord means that we are meant to “lift up our drooping hands and make straight paths for your feet....so that you might be healed”.

Here is the most intriguing and interesting part of the passage to me. All of this pursuit of heroic virtue, the privilege of the revelation of Jesus in our time, the discipline which may be imposed on us and the healing which it intends are all focus on one purpose. To pursue peace and holiness.

This is different than any exhortation to “be at peace” or even peacemaking, but rather to pursue peace—follow after it—make it the principle agenda item in your life alongside the holiness “without which no one will see the Lord”. To pursue peace is to be actively engaged in peace as an activity. Peace as more than an absence of conflict, but rather a peace of God, “which passeth all understanding”. Holiness and peace are not gifts we can earn or achieve. They are gifts from God which we can, however, pursue. To make holiness and peace the core of our future means that we are placing the kingdom and the kingdom's needs at the centre of our life together and that any action or agenda in our life will only make sense through those two lenses: Peace and holiness.

As it is Ash Wednesday, today is an excellent day to consider the ways in which we might pursue peace and holiness in our lives. Living reconciled to the Lord is a primary requirement of all disciples, but now we have a clear agenda of what we are meant to receive.

Open your hearts to the gift of grace which God wishes to give in the Lord Jesus Christ and you might just find that the peace that has eluded you until now, is easier to pursue and indeed, easier to dwell within.

The Right Rev. William Cliff, *Bishop of Ontario*

Special Services Today:
Ash Wednesday Holy Eucharists: 12:15pm & 7pm

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

Psalm 31; Deuteronomy 7: 12-16; Titus 2: 1-15

GETTING RIGHTWISE WITH GOD

We are in Lent, a period of the year leading to the climax that everything from Advent through Christmas, Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord, the Presentation in the temple have all led up to, the very foundation of our baptismal covenant and confirmation that we walk in His way. This is a period of more intense reflection, a time when we pause to refocus on the core of our commitment to Christ. To reaffirm our faith.

Getting rightwise with God has been the hallmark of Judeo-Christian spiritual and ethical beliefs since Abraham. The readings noted above, as very disparate as they are, have this goal in common. That commonality underscores what the Hebrew and Christian Bibles are essentially about – relationship. Our relationship to each other, to our neighbour, to the general community, to others perhaps not of our faith, and, above all, our relationship to God.

There is no circumstance or relationship in our current world that is not reflected somewhere in the Bible—no moral or ethical dilemma, no family or interpersonal issue, no national or international difficulty. It's all there. In our reading from Deuteronomy, the issue is the reciprocal covenant between God and the chosen people. The consequences of abrogating the covenant with God are made clear. The Psalmist sings of the joys of being in right relationship with God—and the consequences of going another way. And the passage from Titus speaks to the necessity of lending order to the movement toward The Way based upon the New Covenant—and the need to quell the forces that work against that goal.

The complexities of their various lives and circumstances must have loomed as large to these ancient people as ours do to us in our own very complicated world. But their pole star was God no matter how difficult the issues. Their faith was bedrock. As we approach the

holiest time of the Christian year, as we mourn the crucifixion and celebrate the resurrection, as we face a world of violence and uncertainty, let us keep our gaze fixed on that same star. Let faith remain our own bedrock. And let us also be mindful of what the coming Easter celebration stands for – all that is positive and good. All that drives us to remain rightwise with God. And from that, all else follows...

Lynn Wilson

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

Psalm 31; Deuteronomy 7: 12-16; Titus 2: 1-15

“In you, Lord, I have taken refuge!” I imagine king David singing this psalm in a subdued mode. He has given us a good example of turning to God in times of trouble; and we are facing our share of trouble right now both in the church and in the world. In his prayer, David acknowledges that God is his rock and his fortress as well as his refuge. In his distress, David trusts God with the most precious part of his being saying:” Into your hand I commit my spirit”; words repeated by Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:46). David approaches his maker in utter humility, recalling God’s steadfast love, His faithfulness and His abundant goodness to inspire God to come to his aid. He does not raise any good deed he may have done himself, but only God’s righteousness and His reputation. “Deliver me in Your righteousness!”

David’s appeal to God’s righteousness could foreshadow what St. Paul refers to as “sound doctrine” in Titus 2:1, teaching that comes from God. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8: “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” In Titus Paul’s main focus is the impact that Christ’s grace must have on interpersonal relationships as described in the context of the society of the first century CE. As Christ sacrificed himself on the cross to redeem us, we should also aim to put the needs of others first. A Christ-inspired community should be respectful, productive and use sound speech. Its members should build up one another. Such a community would reflect the sense of refuge we find in Christ.

David knew today’s readings in Deuteronomy 7, where Moses tells us that if we pay attention to God’s laws and follow them, He will keep His covenant of love with us. God promises blessings for those who earnestly seek him. In verses 19 and 20 of Psalm 31, David invokes the abundant goodness that God has laid up for those who seek refuge in Him. “In the shelter of Your presence you hide them from human plots.” The shelter of God’s presence is a place of healing, especially for a broken human spirit. God’s presence will also help us to better understand His teaching. I pray that each of us will have an opportunity this Lenten season to enter into the shelter of God’s presence—a time of silence before God, a

quiet time of reflection in nature, a time of prayer with other believers or in solitude; we each have our unique way of communing with the Almighty.

In the closing verses David shares that God came to his rescue. David responds with praise. “Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown His steadfast love to me! The Lord preserves the faithful. Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.” In our Christian cycle, our Lenten waiting time will culminate in the joy of Easter. The mellow Kyrie eleison should prepare us for our glorious hallelujahs! But today it is Lent. A time to dwell in the shelter of God’s presence: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

Irene Courage

SATURDAY, MARCH 8
COMMEMORATION OF EDWARD KING,
BISHOP OF LINCOLN, EDUCATOR & PASTOR, 1910.
Psalms 30, 32; Deuteronomy 7 17-26; Titus 3: 1-15

Poor Titus! St. Paul’s letter to Titus was clear in its challenge to Titus. Build a Christian community of model citizens in Crete. And St. Paul was not shy about slandering the Cretans’ character, “liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons”. That should be easy!

But St. Paul began and ended his missive to Titus with a reminder of God’s grace and love. St. Paul set out clear expectations for what a teacher and pastor needs to do when leading a community to the “hope of eternal life”. Although Titus was to encourage people to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, St. Paul reminded Titus that the hope of eternal life was through the Grace of God according to His mercy and sacrifice.

Titus would be well schooled in the power and grace of God. From Deuteronomy and the Psalms, God’s people were reminded of the need to have faith, to turn away from earthly temptations, and to seek forgiveness and mercy. Psalms 30 and 32 are lovely expressions of the joy of forgiveness and the eternity of God’s love.

Bishop Edward King of Lincoln patterned his life on the model set out by St. Paul and Titus. As Bishop he chose to lead a life of faith through service and obedience. When challenged by other clerics about his episcopal practices he accepted the ruling of the authorities. Over a century later the practices on which he was challenged are accepted as drawing God’s community closer in the expression of faith. This gentle Bishop left words of wise counsel to guide and comfort us, “gentleness is not weakness but restrained strength” and “you must go bravely and quietly on”. The collect for Bishop King’s Day of

Commemoration, continues the prayer “Fill us, we beseech thee, with sympathy as tender and deep”. St. Paul’s letter to Titus, Deuteronomy, Psalms 30 and 32 and the pastoral life Bishop King all carry the message of faith and the expression of faith in the world.

So, Titus, rather than daunted by St. Paul’s challenge, would begin the work of Christ on earth to build a community of faith known by their love of each other and God. Still a daunting charge but Titus was strengthened by “the water of rebirth and renewal”. St. Paul told Titus and us through the grace of Jesus Christ our Savior, “we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”

Susan Everett

Special Service Today: March 8, 3pm
Solemn Evensong and Devotions with Caelis Academy
Ensemble and Matthew Larkin, director

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Psalms 63:1-8 (9-11), 98; Deuteronomy 8:1-10; 1 Corinthians 1:17-31

When Jesus took on human form, he took on all our characteristics; not just a few choice ones. With human form came all the weakness and temptations that go along with being human. He cried when he lost his friend Lazarus, he angered when he saw how his father’s house was being abused, he rejoiced as he greeted those he held close, he was disappointed when his disciples didn’t grasp his life lessons, or when they denied him. He tired when crowds sought him out during periods when he wanted much-needed rest or time for prayer and contemplation. He was hungry, thirsty and tempted. Jesus experienced all our human characteristics. Still he did not go against His Father’s wishes or give up on a sinful society.

As his fame and abilities became known, more and more people looked for him. While he hoped that he was wanted as the Son of God, no doubt he knew many gathered around him because of what he could do; not for the message he preached. Christ—the Son of God, Saviour of the world—that message often got lost. People wanted to be healed, fed, given water, provided with a safe and secure place to live. After that, they might have time to listen to what he had to say. Even when they listened, many, including disciples, couldn’t comprehend that all their needs would be met if they were attentive to what Jesus had to say.

Before Christ and many of the prophets, back when the Psalms were written, people were reminded of the recompense that awaited them if they took shelter in the Lord. The psalmist is very explicit: when one puts their trust in God, they will find refuge, protection from enemies, companionship, forgiveness of sins and salvation.

This is the same message Paul imparted to the Corinthians. Skill and wisdom do not get a person into God's Kingdom—simple faith does. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation, we need only to accept what Jesus has already done for us. If there was a theme for Lent, perhaps it could be: “Remember the Lord your God always” According to Moses real life comes from total commitment to God, not from the things we own or the food we have. Deuteronomy 8:1-10 is a powerful reminder to the Israelites as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. It reflects on their journey through the wilderness and emphasizes the importance of obedience, humility, and gratitude. This passage is not only relevant to the Israelites but offers timeless lessons about trusting God during difficult times, recognizing His provision, and maintaining gratitude in seasons of abundance.

My hope and prayer this Lent is that during these turbulent times we live in, we will put our differences aside and live our life fully committed to God, while praising and giving Him thanks for the many blessings He has given us.

The Rev. Gerald Moore, *Pastoral Assistant*

MONDAY, MARCH 10
COMMEMORATION OF ROBERT MACHRAY,
FIRST PRIMATE OF CANADA 1904
Psalms 41, 52; Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Hebrews 2: 11-18

Hebrews is a New Testament Epistle that was written to Jewish Christians to show how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament hopes and prayers. For generations the Hebrews, descendants of Abraham, struggled with poverty, slavery and dictator Kings. There are many key points in this reading. They have a lot to do with the way Jesus's message can change the way we live, when we follow his commands. Jesus said that he was born as a human and calls us brothers and sisters. We are all in the same family. Jesus experienced all of the same things we struggle with today: temptations, distrust, political challenges, changes and fear of the future. The church that Jesus proclaimed is still struggling on in 2025.

In May of this year the Diocese of Ontario will hold its 146th Synod. This is an opportunity for the church to be full of hope, to be open to change, to explore new ways to be more effective in growing our church's congregations and bringing more young people into the faith. The theme will be “Communities of hope through disruptive grace” The grace of God

flowing through us will change peoples lives. Looking back to time of the ministry of Bishop Robert Machray, has anything changed? Yes, we all know everything has changed. Jesus lived through change and we can also prayerfully live in this new world and should not be afraid of change. The new world holds many challenges. We need to move the Church into important new conversations and new ways of being the Church. We are being called to engage with the world beyond our walls. Will we make room in “the Inn” for God’s people who have no church home? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us in the coming decades?

If we, and the Church keep doing the same things, the faith will not attract young new people, and church attendance will decline. If we keep doing the same things better, our decline will hasten. We will not attract and encourage the new generation of people on the fringes of our churches. Christ’s message is the same, but we must teach the Gospel differently, because the people and the world have changed. Many of the people on the fringe have gifts and they should be encouraged to use their gifts in leadership in our churches. By the grace of God, they will make faith driven changes to our old ways that will bring the younger generation into the faith. It’s up to us to be involved, to encourage and support our Clergy in new ministries, exploring with the new generation new ways for them and for us to continue enjoying worship, fellowship and the peace of God together. By our actions, we will grow the faith one person at time. Pray that our Synod will be open to God’s Grace and Holy Spirit as they make plans for our church’s future. May we, by the grace of God, celebrate new outreach ministries.

Jim Anderson

TUESDAY, MARCH 11

Psalm 45; Deuteronomy 9: 4-12; Hebrews 3:1-11

Psalm 45 is full of the rich imagery of a royal wedding. Its messianic king and bridegroom will ride out victoriously for truth, meekness, and righteousness. Deuteronomy 9 4-12 reminds the Israelites that that God's favour is based on grace, not righteousness. It also iterates that people should be humble and not give themselves credit when things go well. In Hebrews the message is clear: consider that God loves you so much that he sent the ultimate messenger to you. So where does that take us? Loving and caring for our neighbours—not exactly what the passages direct but where I am going. Rabbi Joachim Prinz stated, “neighbour is not a geographic term, it is a moral one.” I would go further to say it is a “moral imperative”.

In 2023 in K.F.L.&A 1 in 3 household lived in food insecurity, sometimes having to chose between paying the rent and buying food. Within Kingston it is 1 in 9. So, on a snowy

Sunday morning if we have 108 people at the church 12 of those households could be food insecure. For 40 years (anniversary this year) Lunch by George has been providing food and clothing for anyone who comes to our site. Last year that meant 30,000 meals went out the door. The last week of January about 600 meals were provided. Not just food but clothing as well. Debbie Docherty and her students in 4 days in January helped 107 individuals with everything from toiletries to socks and sweaters and yes, there were unfilled needs.

Why am I sharing all of this? It is a Lenten reflection and examination. Lunch by George is a downtown program working out of a downtown church. The significance of being "downtown" has changed over the years with the population. We see more need; fewer resources; less understanding; less tolerance; more mental health issues; more substance issues. The people who use our program are our neighbours. People speak of what a dark time this is in our world for many reasons. I want to share some stories with you, stories collected by Deb and our co-ordinator John Jahtuen about the effect of the program on people we serve. They are good stories, gentle stories, showing how simple efforts can provide care and comfort to others. I hope they bring you some "light." They are told not to the glory of the program: *Non nobis domine, non nobis, sed nomine tuo da gloriam*; which takes us back to the readings I hope. "D. arrived for lunch and requested a pair of gloves. Staff noticed his hands were very red and cramped up. D. explained that he had lost his last pair of gloves over a week ago. Once engaged in conversation, D. mentioned that he did not have a change of clothes but more than that, he had not had a conversation with anyone in several days. "You know, I started to talk to myself because I was so lonely. "D. engaged with a compassionate listener for half an hour, received a set of dry clothes (from socks and underwear to pants, a hoodie and a jacket, along with the requested gloves), and an invitation to return the next day for another hot meal and some good conversation."

At our "Free Christmas Markets," when we dispensed a wide variety of donated canned goods and other packaged foods, one unhoused individual pulled me aside to tell me that he and his wife were having a particularly rough week and that it "meant the world to us" to receive a bag full of fresh clothing and another full of food along with a couple of hot meals. When he rejoined his wife, she was speaking to one of our volunteers with tears streaming down her cheeks, telling the volunteer that she couldn't believe how generous we were. As the two of them walked away she was laughing and he was cradling her with one arm. In that moment they looked like any other couple out doing a little Christmas shopping and that's an image, again, that speaks to me louder than words."

Linda Morgan

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

Psalm 119:49-72; Deuteronomy 9:13-21; Hebrews 3:12-19

I find these readings very hard to relate to. Much of the language in them is about God's wrath at His sinful, disobedient people, his threats to destroy them, demands for obedience out of fear of dire consequences, and an image of obedience that entails regular prayer in prostration. Moses reports on God's wrath in Deuteronomy: when the Israelites become stiff-necked or rebellious God will destroy them and blot them out. Moses then embodies this vengeful wrath himself, shattering tablets and destroying the calf idol. As I read these passages I feel myself shutting down: any receptivity I might feel to turn to God to consider my sin or examine my pricked conscience rushes to hide. I then can't even relate well to the Psalm —my usual place of relief. I feel defensive and revulsed by this vengeful, Father-God and uninterested in the laws on Moses' tablets. Shattering stone to get my wandering attention and threatening to destroy me for my sin, to blot me out, does not win me over. The promise of being part of a stronger and more numerous nation also is not language that moves me, especially when held as a reward for collective, unquestioning obedience out of fear.

Why do these passages make me feel detached from my tradition, especially the Jewish roots of Christian faith, inspiring more of my rebellious, agnostic nature? I have been raised with the image of a forgiving, all-accepting Jesus, in a culture with a pluralistic vision that questions tribal identity and discourages exclusive religious affiliation. So I reject this angry Father that demands obedience and the promise of the growing tribe. He leaves me feeling anxious, cold and alienated. However, to my discomfort, I also can see how this wrathful God, meting punishment on His errant, stiff-necked people might still be active in current geo-political events and in the environmental crises on earth now, partnering deftly with our human sin, greed and ignorance to bring on our self-destruction. This idea that we are being blotted out by an angry God is so disturbing and frightening. Where does Jesus' promise of forgiveness lie?

My own tendencies to wander in my attention from my spiritual life, to be stiff-necked or rebellious are plenty and need regular mindfulness. I drift towards my earthly concerns, the demands of daily life, at times especially those that reward my ego. My busy work load and the many people who depend on me become the main source of my identity, a false idol and a way to avoid self care, prayer and reflection.

But the anger of this God who smashes tablets to be heard becomes inseparable as I read these passages from the anger in the fires that sweep through California, or in the wars that rage around the world and in the unstable political atmosphere right at my doorstep. I want

to pull away from the news and take succour in my nearby companions in our focus on smaller, comforting endeavours. Am I asleep at the switch, or is this a healthy response?

So many people I know now are, like me, feeling down and heavy in response to the events of the world, yet helpless to change the patterns.

Feeling this weight on top my seasonal tendency to apathy in February under a cold harsh winter, it is really hard for me to grapple with the idea of God's punishing wrath. My connection to God is nourished better when I feel the hope of His succour and forgiveness, which I see in Jesus: acceptance of my/our flawed nature. When I try to engage with the tablet-shattering Moses and the threats of God's wrath in these passages, I risk a merely intellectual exercise for this Lenten Reflection as my heart hides from the tribe and the God I perceive that they ask me to worship. But I have heard from a few people writing for this collection of Lenten readings that they were also struggling to connect to their assigned Lenten passages this year. When I think of my St. George's colleagues grappling with these heavy passages and possibly feeling the same way - disenfranchised and struggling to engage - I feel moved! Maybe the anonymous distant people who choose the lectionary readings also have spiritual intuitions of a collective malaise gripping the world and are in the fear-grips of it themselves. The lectionary itself seems to have a kind of mysterious biorhythm where moods and patterns highlighting different aspects of our theological heritage can be seen when we step back and look at the sum of readings over time. Maybe we can take something from the overall shape and feeling of things in the orb of our church, like our lectionary, allowing the tension to enter and be felt - as in around the vengeful Father- God of Deuteronomy, and the demand for tribal obedience. We could keep the door open to Him, while also honouring our feelings of bafflement, fear and our inclination to question or reject Him. The idea that feeling baffled and disenfranchised by Scripture is okay, forgivable, even possibly needed, calms my fear and reduces my sense of alienation. I am glad for the chance to express my own voice in this Lenten Reflections book, adding it to the human responses I feel to be so vital at this time.

Holly Gwynne-Timothy

THURSDAY, MARCH 13

Psalm 50; Deuteronomy 9: 23-10; 5 Hebrews 4; 1-10

To my mind, the readings for today are giving instruction in obedience and faith to fulfil the covenants between God and His people (the “Promised Land,” and Commandments found in The Old Testament and the New Testament promise of eternal rest in Heaven). Only by God’s mercy and grace, and Jesus’ sacrifice, are these accomplished. These readings also made me reflect on how, over three millennia, God’s people have been continually guided and saved by a host of intercessors including Jesus and also how human nature and ever-changing societal constructs create challenges to having and keeping faith and a relationship with God.

In the Deuteronomy passage (OT), the prophet Moses admonishes the Israelites for their constant disobedience, wickedness, and lack of faith in God. While Moses was retrieving the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai, the Israelites had created and started worshipping a Golden Idol, breaking their sacred covenant to worship only the one true God and to obey His Commandments. As punishment, the Lord planned to destroy His people, but Moses interceded on their behalf. God replaced the stone commandments that Moses had destroyed in anger and commanded Moses to build the Ark of The Covenant to protect the tablets. Like the wandering Israelites, we today can also struggle to keep our faith in a world, seriously mired in complex environmental, social and geopolitical issues. But of course, if we truly trust in God, we are to have nothing else to fear (despite very real concerns).

The 50th Psalm was composed by Asaph, a chief musician, prophet and seer in the court of David. It describes being judged by the Mighty Lord, but with grace, fairness and patience. God has no desire for material sacrifices that He already owns, nor empty rituals. Instead, sincere obedience and worship is how God is to be honoured. Those who have broken God’s commandments (by hypocrisy, disobedience, theft, lying, etc.) and not taken the Lord seriously can still be saved by a change of heart, repentance and God’s grace.

The Hebrews passage warns of the potential to fail to enter eternal rest in Heaven, again through the sins of disobedience, disbelief and a lack of faith and not sharing the Good News (Evangelism). Concerning doubt and uncertainty in our walk with God, I will close with a link to a thoughtful review I came across critiquing the pivotal speech about faith offered in the current hit movie, Conclave.

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2025/01/15/from-doubting-thomas-to-doubting-peter/>

Vicki Parrish

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

Psalms 40, 54; Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Hebrews 4:11-16

From Deuteronomy: What does the Lord ask of us? To fear the Lord. To conform to all his ways. To love him and to serve him with all our heart and soul. These are the precepts of the Law, from the God who executes justice for the widow and the orphan and who loves the stranger. The scholars interpret stranger as resident alien. You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt. The law is given after the Exodus from Egypt but while that is still bright in memory of the People of Israel. Pretty clear instructions from Old Deuteronomy! From Hebrews: Authored by the ever popular Anonymous, someone in Paul's network of Apostles to the early Church. The faithful are urged to continue to follow the word of God as brought to them through the Word of Christ, which is living and active among them.

From old and newer sources arise the same message. The Old Testament writings about the law are clear as to how Justice should be shaped. It should be tempered with mercy to those unfortunate in society. We heard that from the pulpit of the Washington National Cathedral a few weeks ago. In Hebrew Law the widows and orphans were examples of the unfortunate. They were to be the special care of a just society. They were, for instance, allowed to glean from the harvested fields, and in those fields were to be left a portion of the harvest.

The stranger in the midst also comes in for special mention as there is a requirement to treat them with love. Jesus simply said "Love one another as I have loved you". Sacrificial, unending, enduring love. So where have we gone adrift from these clear unambiguous pronouncements? In our own lives, in our own city, in our own province, in our own Country. Where is love in shutting down encampments for the homeless? Why are they living in tents in the winter anyway?

Laurie Dempsey

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

Psalm 55; Deuteronomy 11:18-28; Hebrews 5:1-10

The overwhelming message I get from these readings is a sense of duty or obligation. The Deuteronomy passage reinforces the rules of the covenant between God and the Jews. It's an extension of the 10 Commandments found chapters earlier, and reinforces the main imperatives found therein.

In order to prosper, the Jewish community of the time, and we in a modern context are called to love the Lord our God, walk in his ways, and hold fast to him. That both sounds like an easy ask and like a lot of work. Sure, it's only three things. Loving God; easy! Walk in his ways; well, Jesus has some big shoes... Hold fast to him; you mean all the time? In all ways? These duties require some effort!

Not only must we adhere to these commandments, but we must hold them in our hearts and souls, keep them on our hands, on our foreheads, teach them to our children, talk about them at home and away, when we rest and when we're awake. Write them on our doorposts and our gates. Proclaim God in our lives in words and actions. Remember to hold him close to us in all things. Wow. This suddenly feels like a full-time job!

The reading from Hebrews is a huge consolation for me. It tells us that we don't have to do it all on our own. God has a plan for each of us, and that we'll be appointed to tasks based on our individual strengths. Yes, the aim is to fulfill all of God's commandments, but there's an acknowledgement that we're human and that none of us are capable of excelling in all areas. Thank goodness!

Here at St. George's were a microcosm of this reading; some of us are better with reading or praying aloud, some with children, some with music, some with feeding, or organizing, or welcoming. We all have a role to play, and we must all work together to honour God's will for our lives, individually and collectively. There's a place for all of us, and together we can do great things. Where do you fit in?

Megan Ariki

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Psalms 24, 29; Jeremiah 1:1-10; 1 Corinthians 3:11

In Psalm 24, we are asked the question, “who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?” We are living in a frightening time where we read accounts of people being rounded up in the streets and it is believable that it is happening now but is in fact quoted passages from the Diary of Anne Frank. Many people today are eager to claim that holy place, to proclaim even that their position over other people has been granted to them by God. They selectively use scripture and redefine other people to raise up some and dehumanize others.

As we sit, though, as people of faith in this world, God is indeed showing us a mountain but it is not the lofty, exclusionary place that some would twist it into. God is showing us mountains of injustice, mountains of suffering, mountains of people crying out. Mountains where we are called to work with God’s people, no matter their ethnicity, gender, class, or belief. God’s holy place is not a golden palace devoid of those people that we do not like but a place where all of creation finds healing and grace.

The people that God is calling to the mountain are those guided by ethics and morality. When the psalmist wrote of one who has clean hands and a pure heart, it was not a reference to ritual cleansing but rather someone who is grounded in morality. This seems to be something that is increasingly disappearing from the world stage as we watch the news with growing alarm day by day. In the Canadian Forces, we have ethical principles that we are guided by, the first being to respect the dignity of all people.

If all people were guided by this principle, how many mountains could we climb? How many places could we restore to holiness? Our call as well is to band together as community from the grassroots as God calls us to “lift up the gates, that the King of glory may come in.” We lift the gates, we break down the walls, we fling open the doors, and the Lord Almighty comes in to be with the whole diversity of his people.

LCol. The Rev. Canon Catherine Askew, *Chaplain, Canadian Armed Forces*

MONDAY, MARCH 17
COMMEMORATION OF PATRICK,
MISSIONARY BISHOP IN IRELAND, 461
Psalms 56, 57; Jeremiah 1:12-19; Romans 1:1-15

Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, was born ca. 389 in Roman Britain. The details of Patrick's life are uncertain. He admits that he was not religious as a child and had little use for the Church. As an early teen, he was seized by Irish raiders and sold as a slave. There in hardship and isolation, he began to pray every day. After six years as a shepherd, he managed to escape and eventually reach home. His experience had been a spiritual conversion, and he now had a certain conviction of his vocation: he was to preach the faith to the Irish people. After becoming a cleric, he returned to spread Christianity in northern and western Ireland. In later life, he served as a Bishop. He was later to become revered as the Patron Saint of Ireland.

As I read Psalm 56, Jeremiah 1, and Romans 1, I tried to interpret what the writers were saying to me and the applicability to us all today. For me, Psalm 56 is a testament to David's faith in God even in the face of great adversity. It reminds us that when fear seems overwhelming, our refuge and strength can always be found in God. Jeremiah 1 gives an image of the "almond tree" serving as a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness, His watchfulness, and His calling on the lives of His people. I think this verse challenges us to be alert and attentive to God's word, and to respond in obedience to His call on our lives. Romans 1:1-15, seemed to me to be the connector with a theme of evangelism and mission. The verse underscores the importance of proclaiming the gospel to all people.

So what? As we reflect on the life of a young teenager who through trust in God and, I would assume, his community, he became the patron Saint of Ireland. Throughout his life he must have endured great hardship and adversity, but he found strength in God and that faith enabled him to live a life of evangelism to tell the story of God.

As a soldier witnessing some to the worst (and best) of humanity, I carried my dad's wartime pocket bible in my body armour. It provided a sense of connectivity, refuge, strength, and hope. Twenty-four hours a day, we are constantly being bombarded by the constant news of war, civil unrest, famine, discrimination, homelessness, mistrust, and the horrific impact of climate change. If Saint Patrick was here today, as we reflect during this Lenten season, he might say to us that in our own individual and collective way we must live and proclaim the love of God and have faith, and that no matter how bad it gets, there is hope!

Alan Stephen

TUESDAY 18 MARCH

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP & TEACHER OF THE FAITH

Psalms 61, 62; Jeremiah 2:1-13; Romans 1:16-25

**Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your wings. *Psalm 61:4***

What is your idea about home? When you hear it or read it, do you think about the place where you grew up and still visit dearly-loved family? Perhaps you connect “home” to a specific residence, house, apartment where you live now, defined by an address. For some it may be the town or city from your first memories. Or maybe it brings back thoughts of a place you were eager to leave.

For me, well, I’ve had a lifetime to consider the meaning of home and how remarkably the way “home” has gripped my life. When I was in the summer between fourth and fifth grades in my “home-town” in Western Michigan, my parents sent me to a week-long, sleep-over camp. I looked forward to this adventure, spending a week with my friends away from family routines. But I was horrified to experience, almost from the moment my parents’ car receded from view after dropping me off, the most visceral home-sickness. I felt like crying, and did cry, ashamed of my childish reaction, yet unable to do anything about it. This unexplainable yearning, for what? My parents, my siblings, my bedroom, my mother’s cooking? Really, I didn’t even like my parents much at that time (pre-teen) and my siblings annoyed me. But separation from them, from my “home” made me almost physically ill. I never went to another camp.

Nearly 20 years later I suffered the same feelings, but this time I was a wife and mother and pregnant with a second child two months from due date. We had just moved to a town outside New York City, where my husband was beginning a post-doctoral fellowship. We knew no-one and the longing for “home” was as sharp as a knife. But this time, there were life-lines: two Catholic families living on either side of us, with lots of children and hearts full of Christian grace and charity. They showed me what it was like to make a home, a nest of comfort and familiarity and to rely on “strangers” for community. What a revelation! Four years later we landed in Kingston, for what we thought was a brief two or three year stint and then back to the US for the rest of our lives. When the offer came to go back to the US, we looked around us and realized we were already home. Friends, a supportive community, a culture that valued diversity and a country that tried very hard to take care of their people, was where we were already establishing a home-base.

During the past six years, I have seen that same mix of sorrow for a lost home and hope for a new one on the faces of our newcomers from the war-torn areas of the middle-east. The wonderful people at St George's who welcome and help settle these people into their new lives in a new home-country, know the importance of home. They lovingly acquire furnishings, food, appliances, a television and the ever important laptop for staying connected with family. As much as they can, they provide a clean, comfortable home. But they never place photos or pictures on the walls, because every family fleeing their original home comes with a suitcase filled with heirlooms, photos and tapestries with which to make their new home a nest which comforts, strengthens and sustains.

The unhoused or homeless people served by Lunch by George are perhaps the most acute example in our community of the sorrow and pain caused when there is no home, no place to rest or be warm, no place to recover and be nourished.

Today, as the season of Lent and Easter approaches, we consider the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus of whom Matthew says in chapter 8:20: "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head". Jesus knew first hand the hardship of homelessness. At the same time, we watch over our southern border as a crazed man who lives in multiple gilded homes forcibly removes immigrants from their homes, without mercy or justice, and rails about taking our "home and native land" from us. And we pray with the Psalmist, not just for ourselves, but for people everywhere for whom home insecurity is their daily burden:

**Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your wings.**

Jann Van Vugt

WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH

JOSEPH OF NAZARETH

Psalm 132; Isaiah 63: 7-16; Matthew 1:18-25

The Book of Isaiah tells of Jerusalem's descent into idolatry and injustice, its attack by the Assyrians, subsequent destruction by the Babylonians, and its ultimate rise again as a new and holy city of God. Since the book provides an account of the Israelites after their exile in Babylon and the subsequent rebuilding of Jerusalem which takes place 200 years after Isaiah's likely death, it is probable that Isaiah's prophetic followers wrote the chapters from 40 to 66. The reading for today, Isaiah 63: 7-16, would thus have been written by them.

It is a beautifully crafted passage that characterizes God, in the Zion tradition, as a mighty warrior king who for centuries has stood by his chosen people despite their unfaithfulness, idolatry and corruption. We are reminded of God's strength and loving deeds, notably rescuing the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and guiding them to a place of restoration. When verses 15-16, are combined with the three verses that follow, the passage flows into a prayer of penitence. That is, the Israelites seek forgiveness from the God whose historic goodness and mercy they have forgotten as they strayed from the path of righteousness.

While the scripture is an historical account of the Israelites, it can teach us something important about our own lives. Sometimes we lose our way. Teenagers may go through rebellious periods only to realize in adulthood that parents might not have been so terribly wrong after all. Marriages too sometimes break up because the partners grow apart, or each feels the other is pushing them away; they are unable to find a way back to each other. With roughly half of all marriages today ending in divorce, it seems reasonable to suppose that at least in some cases a reconciliation and restoration would have been possible. Just as the Israelites came to reflect on their own failure to appreciate the love God has shown them, perhaps some marriage partners contemplating divorce might do something similar: apologize and ask for forgiveness as a step toward recapturing the love they once had.

On a personal note, I went through a period in my early adulthood when my faith slipped away. Although a "cradle" Anglican, I found the need for the "proof" of God's existence to require more than faith alone. I studied philosophical proofs that purported to deduce God's existence, but to me they were not persuasive. So, I became an agnostic. The parallel with Isaiah's story of the people of Israel is imperfect because I did not slip into the depths of depravity to which they fell, but I did fail to remember the influence of God's love on my life. Penitence and the return of faith came with being witness to the innocence and inherent goodness of our young children. Their perfections were not "provable", they just existed.

And so it was, in the re-emergence of my faith. God does not need to be proven, he simply exists. Just as my faith was restored, so it was with Isaiah's prophesying the return to faith of the repentant people of Israel.

Scott Carson

THURSDAY 20 MARCH

CUTHBERT, BISHOP OF LINDISFARNE, 680

Psalms 71; Jeremiah 4. 9-10,19-28; Romans 2:12-24

Some things don't seem to change much, do they? We find ourselves at a very turbulent time in our history, and when I look at the assignments for today, they could be written in 2025 with a little modification of language, context and custom.

The psalmist is looking at the end of his life, "now that I am old and grey." It is an intensely personal and human outpouring. He is grateful to God for his good life and God's presence in it, but at the

same time he's a bit worried about what lies ahead and trusts that God will be there for him. "You have sent troubles and suffering upon me, but you will restore my strength, you will keep me from the grave." Sound familiar? Jeremiah, in his voice of doom, has a vision of the coming destruction of Jerusalem because of the evil in the world. "[T]he Lord says: my people are stupid, they don't know me... they are experts at doing evil, but failures at doing what is good." Sound familiar? Paul, writing to the Romans, uses the analogy of circumcision to explain to his audience that outward appearances are not enough if the inward orientation of the heart is wrong. Sound familiar?

Now put this in the context of 2025, with wars and rumours of wars, climate change deniers, the plight of the poor and homeless, and rich men using their powers to disenfranchise others and using others for their own ends. They say they are Christian but do not behave within the value system that Jesus taught: to help the poor and needy, respect the earth and put love at the centre of everything that we do.

So, what is our response to this threat to everything that we hold dear? Clearly there is an outward and an inward component. We can't show genuine, strong and loving behaviours unless they come from a genuine, strong and loving place. This means to me that we need to deepen our own spiritual life in whatever way that means to us. Maybe more prayer, Bible reading, meditating, mindfulness, listening and trusting, and then we do what we are led to do by the spirit. Although many of us are "old and grey," we can still write letters to our

leaders, volunteer to help others, or simply listen to someone's story. Perhaps Lent is a good time to look at the balance between our inward and outward energies so that we may be

stronger as a community to withstand the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" that are directed our way.

Ruth Oliver

FRIDAY 21 MARCH

THOMAS CRANMER, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, 1556

Psalm 69:1-23, (24-30), 31-38; Jeremiah 5:1-9; Romans 2:25-3:18

It is mid-January as I begin to write this. By the time it is read, we will all have survived the "cruel month" of January, and we may see a glimmer of hope with the coming of Spring. This week we are struggling with the Call to be the compassionate inclusive community that cares for the "least among us." My daily work at Lunch by George calls me to that challenge as we endeavour to meet the most basic needs of our marginalized community members. For most, that means a hot meal and some clothing to warm the chilled body. For some it is a plea, through heartbreaking tears of desperation, for a compassionate listener, someone who will hear their pain and anguish.

All of us in this Faith community are doing our best. Some are frightened by this Call, some are annoyed by our sense of sanctuary being violated, some are deeply concerned and confused by the seemingly overwhelming challenge before us. It is painfully clear to me that this challenge confronts every community, secular or faith-based. We have failed our fellow community members. We have allowed our Social Safety Net to develop massive holes. We are reluctant to meet the ever-increasing needs of those who fall through those holes.

Here comes the "However."

It is now almost mid-February as I pick up my pen to write the "However." Our Call, our challenge, our confusion, continues as we try to understand the way forward. The "However" is the fact that we do so! We do respond! We do move forward, one stumbling, one staggering, step at a time. We have made mistakes in the past and we will continue to do so into the future. However, we will continue to heed the Call, to listen to the still quiet voice of what is Right and Just. And to the best of our ability, we will walk humbly with

whatever we consider our God to be. Right now, in our present moment. We will choose the Right path as compassionately as possible.

The Readings that I was supposed to reflect on are chilling. Jeremiah in particular describes our current World much too accurately, as humanity struggles to understand whom to follow, what the “Right Way” is. I prefer the Micah 6 reading as well as a teaching ascribed to Buddha and/or Ephesians 4:29. “Before the words cross your lips, are they necessary, are they truthful and are they kind.” Guidance on how to discern the “Right Way” abounds. We have only to open our ears and our hearts.

Debbie Docherty

SATURDAY 22 MARCH

THOMAS KEN, BISHOP OF BATH & WELLS, 1712

Psalms 75, 76; Jeremiah 5:20-31; Romans 3:19-31

Of today’s readings, I was most drawn to Romans 3:19-31. In this chapter Saint Paul is writing to Christians living in Rome, around twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In these verses Saint Paul touches upon the universality of the Church, saying in verse 29, “*Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also*”. At the time the church in Rome would have comprised a mix of both Jews and Gentiles, and Paul’s message would have addressed the radical underpinning of salvation through Christ, that it was open to all.

This universality remains at the core of what it means to be a Christian, and is essential to understanding the mission of the Church. Accepting all as brothers and sisters in Christ, across the broad spectrum of Christian expression, is integral to this mission. This is something I have always admired about Anglicanism, both in its ability to contain a broad array of styles of worship, but also despite its origin as a national church, its willingness and ability to remain a church open to all. While our heritage in the English Church is at the heart of our styles of worship, we are stronger for being a church that welcomes those of all backgrounds into this tradition.

My own family is a reflection of this; I am a cradle Anglican whose ancestors worshipped in the Church of England and Church of Ireland for hundreds of years, but my wife came to the church as an adult. Her family has no history of association with Anglicanism and she was not raised in any church, but has been made just as welcome at every church we have attended, and has embraced the traditions of the church as fervently as anyone who grew up in the church.

In this, Saint Paul's message is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. God remains the Lord of all.

Ben Savage

Event Today: March 22, 12:30-4:30pm
The Great Bach Marathon

SUNDAY 23 MARCH

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Psalms 93, 96; Jeremiah 6: 9-15; 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20.

In the exhortation at the beginning of the Penitential Service in the Book of Common Prayer, we read the following words: "I therefore invite you, 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 meditation upon God's holy Word." (page 612)

Prayer, fasting and self-denial are not popular concepts in our modern secular society. Instead, we are encouraged in advertisements and marketing campaigns or even by well-intentioned friends to "treat ourselves". We are told that we "deserve it" or that we have "earned" it. Presumably whatever it is that we "deserve" is something that someone is selling. We are constantly encouraged to consume more as if that will bring enjoyment and fulfillment. We are rarely encouraged to consume less. In the words of the prophet Jeremiah from today's Old Testament reading, "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain" (Jeremiah 6:13).

For me, the traditional observances of Lent are a way to regain perspective. As I write this reflection, I am cognizant that I am warm and dry and that there is food in the refrigerator, even if it doesn't contain my favourite treats. Already that makes me so much more fortunate than a great many in our world.

This season, let whatever Lenten discipline we undertake pivot us from any perceived sense of deprivation or scarcity to a grateful appreciation for the abundance that we already have. To quote the BCP once again (the thanksgiving in Family Prayer, page 736), Let us give thanks "For life and health and safety, for power to work and leisure to rest, for all that is beautiful in creation and in the lives of [people], ... but above all ... for our spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus our Lord, for the means of grace and the hope of glory."

The Rev. Canon Peter Case

MONDAY 24 MARCH

Psalm 80; Jeremiah 7:1-15; John 7:14-36

“Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved”. This is written in Psalm 80, not once, not twice, but three times, which leads me to believe that it’s important. Even as an adult, I need to be reminded of things multiple times, and there’s a certain beauty in seeing that in a Psalm.

But why is it important? In Jeremiah 7:1-15, there is a stark warning of the dangers of trusting in “deceptive words that are worthless”. This passage is, to me, a reminder of the importance of turning to God in prayer and in deed. It speaks to the hypocrisy we see all around us claiming to be of God, but utterly failing to live up to what that means in our lives.

It is a reminder, as in Psalm 80, to ask God to restore us so that we may be saved.

This theme is further reinforced in John 7:14-36, where Jesus emphasizes that “whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth”. This pattern of seeking what is good through God continues.

“Restore us, God Almighty, make your face shine on us, that we may be saved”. What in my life can I bring to God to restore, so that I am seeking His glory, rather than personal glory? What am I doing in my life that is like those in Jeremiah 7: 1-15, who stand before God, claiming to be saved, while doing detestable things?

Probably a lot. But that’s the beautiful part of Lent for me. It’s a time to take stock of where I am falling short, and where I need to simply say “restore *me*, God Almighty, make your face shine on *me*, so that *I* might be saved”

Eden Cameron

TUESDAY 25 MARCH

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Psalms 85, 87; Isaiah 52:7-12; Hebrews 2:5-10

Earlier this year, as I prepared for ordination, I read the Archbishop of York’s book *On Priesthood: Servants, Shepherds, Messengers, Sentinels, and Stewards* (Cottrell, 2020, Hodder &

Stoughton). It was a great joy to read. Perhaps you recall a book that is so beautifully written and makes so many excellent points that you want to read it slowly, so as to savour it? As though, if you were highlighting the ‘best’ passages, the whole book would be marked up? This was that type of book for me.

In the English Common Worship Ordinal, the term “sentinel” is one of the five words used to describe the work of a Priest. A sentinel is a person whose job it is to keep watch. The Archbishop writes that this can be one of the loneliest and isolating elements of ministry – but that it is a key undertaking of the Church. We are to keep watch for the creative work of God within the world, within our communities, and within ourselves. We watch by paying attention to the world around us as well as paying attention and listening to God in contemplation and prayer.

In today’s readings we hear twice about the importance of watching, listening, and looking for the Kingdom of God. In Isaiah 52 we hear about the Sentinels’ delight when they see the return of the Lord to Zion, when “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10). The verses immediately before the reading from Hebrews begin by saying that we “must pay greater attention to what we have heard...” (Hebrews 2:1). Both of these texts emphasize the importance of paying attention.

How many of us spend much of our lives wearing blinders to the active, creating, redeeming work that God is doing right now? Perhaps, when we come to worship on a Sunday morning, we take them off for an hour or two, but then put them back on as we leave the service. I know people who would tell me that

when they look around, all they see is despair and hopelessness in the world. It is important to acknowledge those feelings because they can motivate us to action, but they are not the whole story.

What would it be like, today, to spend time actively looking for God’s work in your life? In the life of your family? In our community? In the world?

Where would you look?

Where would you listen?

What would you notice?

For you are great and do wondrous things, O Merciful and Gracious God. (Psalm 86:10,15).

The Rev. Dr. Reagan Gale, *deacon*

WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH

Psalm 119:97-120; Jeremiah 8:18-9:6

“O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” *Ps. 119:97 (KJV)*

I found myself with two opposite reactions when I read this passage. The first time I read it the passage appeared wooden and unconvincing. The opening declaration of “love of the law” sounded odd and preachy. I noticed in the longer passage echoes of phrases frequently found elsewhere in the psalms (and sometimes, to me, more beautifully expressed, like in Ps. 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man that walketh . . . his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”) Psalm 119:97 did not move me.

The next day, looking at the exact same passage again, I found it moved me.

This experience reminds me that what I bring to the bible affects what I take from it. A negative reaction might say more about my state of mind than about whether there is some nourishment that can be taken if I engage in a different way with the passage.

As a lawyer in secular law during the work week, I am used to laws being alternately useful or annoying, but not worthy of love. Being raised Christian rather than Jewish, I find the notion of “loving the law” of God a bit foreign. In my own upbringing, I am much more comfortable with, and much more familiar with, St. Paul’s teaching that “the letter of the law kills, while the spirit enlivens.” I remember Jesus’ teaching to the moralistic crowd who wanted to stone the adulterous woman in reliance on the law, to whom Jesus said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” If Jesus’ teaching to the crowd is true, it is not clear to me why the law of stoning is worthy of love at all. In the Anglican church, which upholds a more liberal view of Christianity, I am familiar with Jesus’ promise that after he dies there will be a “spirit of truth” that “will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13.) St. George’s, like all the Anglican communion, has upheld the idea that the church can and should be led to new truths, like moral teachings on sexuality and marriage. Rather than “loving the law,” I am far more familiar with the idea that Christians do not really have to care too much for the Law, which is found in what some Christians sometimes pejoratively call the “old” testament. Jesus himself famously taught that all the Law and the Prophets can be summed up in 2 principles: Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength and love your neighbour as yourself. Hearing this famous quote of Jesus pretty much every week in church, I might say to myself, why bother loving the Law, or even learning about it? It is cumbersome, obscure, and full of weird and rightly rejected ideas.

So when read a second time, why did the passage move me? I think the reason is the psalmist testifies viscerally to his powerful, but perhaps even hidden, state of love and meditation toward God. In the psalmist's tradition, which is also our tradition, God is known through the revelation we have received as the Law. The law is tremendously elastic, as Jesus taught in his life and words. Properly interpreted, it can mean almost the exact opposite of what it says. It can be effectively dismissed or ignored. That is a good thing. Yet, with devotion and true meditation, in the spirit of the psalmist, one is elevated. It is the visceral experience of the psalmist that speaks to me as it proposes to us, and inspires by example, a kind of devotion and steadiness, which can be very comforting in the world we live in.

Gordon Gwynne-Timothy

THURSDAY 27 MARCH

CHARLES HENRY BRENT,

BISHOP OF THE PHILIPPINES AND OF WESTERN NEW YORK, 1929

Psalms [83] or 42, 43; Jeremiah 10:11-24; Romans 5:12-21

Today marks the anniversary of the death of Charles Henry Brent (April 9, 1862 – March 27, 1929). He was the Episcopal Church's first Missionary Bishop of the Philippine Islands (1902–1918); Chaplain General of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I (1917–1918); and Bishop of the Episcopal Church's Diocese of Western New York (1918–1929). We commemorate him for his passionate and unyielding belief that all humankind is equally valuable in the sight of God.

This at a time when racism flourished world-wide and sadly persists to this day.

Charles Henry Brent was born on April 9, 1862, in Newcastle, Ontario. Brent's college preparation was done in 1880–1881 at Trinity College School in Port Hope and he then attended Trinity College, Toronto, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in classical honours in 1884. While teaching at TCS he prepared himself for ordination. Brent was ordained a deacon on March 21, 1886, in the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. However, there were no openings for him in his diocese, so he looked for a position in the United States. In 1887, he was ordained to the priesthood on March 6. After that, he was called to his first ministerial position in Buffalo, New York.

In 1887 Brent moved to the Cowley monastery in Boston where he was placed in charge of St. Augustine's chapel which had been built to minister to African-Americans living in the West End of Boston. The years he spent with the Cowley Fathers (1888-1891) were crucial to Brent's spiritual formation. As Brent ministered in Boston's slums, he became receptive to the social gospel, then in vogue with urban churches throughout the United States. In his "theology of the social gospel" Brent held that the church was "responsible for all of society" and that society would be "regenerated by its participation in the life of the church." Therefore, for Brent the purpose of "the Christian mission" was to renew "the spiritual, social, and economic life of a people."

When the United States gained control of the Philippines, there was a population of seven and a half million inhabitants, ninety percent of whom were Roman Catholic. In addition to the Roman Catholics, there were three non-Christian groups: in northern Luzon, thousands of head-hunting Igorots practiced their pagan religion in the southern islands; three hundred thousand Moro people were Muslims "of an extremely militant type;" and in Manila itself, the Chinese community of shopkeepers was almost entirely non-Christian.

This was the religious situation in the missionary district of the Philippines in which Brent was elected bishop. Here he would labor for seventeen years to minister to the Christians, to build up the Episcopal church, to convert the non-Christians, and to

end the opium traffic throughout Southeast Asia. Brent also observed a serious need for church unity while in the Philippines. This resulted in his working for it during his time as missionary bishop of the Philippines and as bishop of Western New York; that is, for the rest of his life.

In this season of Lent, the actions of this devout Christian who has gone before us gives us pause for reflection. How do our actions today support inclusivity of all races in the Christian church? How do we work to achieve unity among all Christian denominations to work for the good of the whole church community? How do we live out our faith to give those around us the message of Christ's love for us?

Jane Baldwin

FRIDAY 28 MARCH

Psalm 88; Jeremiah 11:1-8, 14-20; Romans 6:1-11

“We were buried therefore by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.”

I have pondered the meaning of Paul’s writing, “Baptism into death,” before. When I read some commentaries, writers spoke of being immersed in water, in starting a “new life.” Not wanting to get into an immersion vs sprinkling debate, I pondered the meaning of “new life” or being “born again,” the latter saying being a personal stumbling block for me. Many Christians speak of a moment, an awakening, like when Saul became Paul and could see again. I thought that maybe my Faith was somehow inferior when it came to not having that “aha” time when I chose to accept Jesus as my Saviour.

But over the years, I have come to accept, whether right or wrong, that it’s okay not to have that bolt of lightning. Having been baptized as a tiny baby in the Anglican faith, I surely did not know what was going on. And, I assume, I was “sprinkled”! In the Christian home where I was raised, it just was, and is, the way of life. So my personal “born again” meaning is found in a series of rebirth moments, be it worshipping with my fellow parishioners, nursing in ICU, working with the poor and hungry, celebrating with a Christmas gift for them— there are so many “aha” moments when we can walk in Jesus’ footsteps. Yesterday when I walked into the hospital chapel for a moment of prayer, there was a man with his belongings in 2 bags and a bedroll in the back corner, fast asleep. I let him sleep; he was warm and sent the Chaplain to him as I had to start my shift.

These tiny moments show me it’s okay to embrace the small. I don’t have to have been struck by lightning: I was and am baptized in Christ’s death. And I rejoice in His resurrection. We are His feet on Earth, awaiting His coming again. Thanks be to God.

Aveleigh Kyle

SATURDAY 29 MARCH

JOHN KEBLE, PRIEST, 1866

Psalms 87, 90; Jeremiah 13:1-11; Romans 6:12-23

Lord, thou hast been our refuge: from one generation to another. If I were forced to choose only one book of the Bible to accompany me for the rest of my days, it would be, without a doubt, the Psalms. That is not particularly surprising for a musician, but beyond that, the Psalms have such incredible depth and breadth in a slim volume. There is much to be learned from these miniatures in a way that is different from other books.

One of the Psalms appointed for today, Psalm 90, is a particular favourite of mine. There is a stunning arrangement of the entire psalm by Ralph Vaughan Williams, which is one of the reasons I am fond of it. If you are not familiar with that, it is well worth listening to. Another reason is that this Psalm is included at the beginning of the Burial Service in the Prayer Book. I noticed that it was not included in Cranmer's original work in 1549 but had been included by the 1662 revision, where it remains. The addition of this psalm at the beginning of this important liturgy makes perfect sense to me, as the psalm provides firm reassurance of the continuity of the world and the Lord through the ages. It reminds us that we are a part of this unending timelessness.

World events of late have been troublesome and unnerving. The words of this Psalm are particularly helpful against this backdrop, in much the same way as I am sure they were for many Christians around the world in the late 1930s and early '40s.

O God, our help in ages past.

Brad Barbeau

SUNDAY 30 MARCH

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Psalm 32; Joshua 5.9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15.1-3, 11b-32

Joshua 5.9-12

During the wilderness years following the exodus from Egypt, God sustained the Israelites with manna, a miraculous bread from heaven. This experience prepared the people to enter the land God had promised to their ancestors. Now, under the leadership of Joshua, a new generation is ready to claim that promise. The children of those who left Egypt are circumcised at Gilgal and become the holy people who will inherit the land “flowing with milk and honey,” which will now be their sustenance (Joshua 5.1-8). The people move from eating bread directly from heaven to eating bread made by their own hands, which comes from the produce of the land. They are now responsible for the stewardship and production of food for themselves, even as they continue to rely on God who has given the land to them and will victory or defeat. How does the story relate to our experience as a community of St. George’s Cathedral, sustained by God? What manna does God promise for us, and where does God give us freedom and responsibility to work in creation for our own nourishment and sustenance? What feelings might the Israelites have experienced in changing from manna to bread made by their own hands from the land? How might these feelings have changed the way they related to one another, to the land, and to God? How about our own feelings?

Psalm 32

The psalmist expresses the immense feeling of freedom after confessing their sins to God. Hiding and failing to acknowledge our wrongdoings and selfishness can be physically, as well as spiritually and emotionally daunting and painful. God is always ready to receive our prayers of confession and, in his mercy, offer a safe place of forgiveness—a refuge. God is never far from us, but we often feel isolated by our sins because of guilt and shame. We can rejoice and be glad because God’s righteousness and mercy are eternal and God is always ready to grant forgiveness when we ask. How might you express your gratitude to God for mercy and forgiveness? What does it feel like to forgive? To be forgiven?

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Through baptism and our continued participation in the sacramental life of our Cathedral, we are all members of Jesus Christ and so are part of God’s new creation. Paul’s word choice indicates that more than merely individuals being made new, all who are “in Christ” become part of God’s active reconciliation of the entire heavens and earth. That work of reconciliation, which is like a restoration of relationship, was accomplished by Jesus in history. It is also an ongoing process, “already and not yet,” which the members of Jesus

Christ are called to continue through the power of the Holy Spirit, working in and through the church. The exchange between human imperfection and God's righteousness accomplished by Jesus is our hope for a future in which the church as the body of Christ is reconciled to God and works with God to continue that work in all creation. How does our vision of the world and of others change because of our baptism and location "in Christ?" How does our participation in the sacramental life of the Cathedral deepen our connection to God?

Luke 15.1-3, 11b-32

Jesus reveals a key characteristic of God through this parable: God is eager for reconciliation and relationship and does not hold our failures against us. Jesus was also revealing this characteristic of God through his consistent table fellowship with people who were considered "outsiders" to those in the religious establishment of his time. In the parable, not only does the father rejoice and call for a celebration when the "lost" son returns after rudely demanding his inheritance and then squandering it, but the father also counsels the elder son, who believes he has been faithful, to welcome his brother and drop his judgement and resentment, so that the two might be reconciled as well. All are in need of reconciliation with God and with one another, and God rejoices and gives of Godself extravagantly to make this possible. What other memories from Jesus' life and ministry can you think of that show God's characteristics of love, mercy, and reconciliation? Who do you think Jesus would eat with us in our modern context in Kingston that would fall outside the boundaries of religious or social convention? How might we show the same desire for reconciliation as Jesus and the Father in our own Kingston community?

The Venerable John M. Robertson, *Honourary Associate Priest*

MONDAY 31 MARCH

COMMEMORATION OF JOHN DONNE, PRIEST & POET, 1631

Psalm 89:1-18; Jeremiah 16:10-21; Romans 7:1-12

Before I came to the Church I often pointed to the contradictory passages within the Bible as proof of its fallibility, and therefore, God's fallibility. The readings for today exist at one of those intersections of contradiction that used to vex me so greatly. On one hand, Psalm 89 tells us that God's "steadfast love is established for ever; [His] faithfulness is as firm as the heavens." On the other, Jeremiah 16:10-21 tells the story of a time when God's people so thoroughly turned away from Him that He forsake them, saying "I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known... and I will show you no favour".

How can we reconcile these two ostensibly contradictory readings, and why have they been placed together for us to consider side-by-side? Perhaps the answer lies in the third reading we have been asked to consider: Romans 7:1-12.

The reading from Romans asks us to consider the practical application of God's law, and importantly, the way that Christ's death and resurrection has changed our relationship with God's law. The reading tells us that, like a widow whose promise to her husband has died with him, "my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God."

Remember that it was God's law which the people broke and caused God to cast them out of the lands which he had given them. As Romans tells us, sin finds opportunity to deceive us into thwarting and breaking God's law. However, as Christ has died for our sins, we too have "died to the law". It is through Christ that we can once again "walk in the light of [His] countenance and exult in [His] name all day long."

So to my great surprise, at the intersection of these two apparent contradictions I find neither fallibility nor confusion, but rather, Christ on the cross.

Victoria Savage

TUESDAY 1 APRIL

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE, PRIEST 1831
Psalms 97, 99, [100]; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Romans 7:13-25

Today's readings in Jeremiah and Romans are mostly about laws or rules human beings are expected to follow and the results of not adhering to them. In Jeremiah 17, the prophet laments Judah's sins, primarily idolatry, but the verses for today are specifically about the consequences of not obeying the 4th commandment, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." The rules of remembrance are explicit and detailed, and the punishment for not following them is also explicit—and dire: The Lord "will kindle a fire in [the city's] gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched." The message is, follow the rules and you'll please God; disobey them and you're doomed!

St. Paul's passage is not so direct or clear. Indeed, it's downright obscure; as one commentator notes: "One can only offer their opinion and own interpretation, as this Epistle is a tricky one, as are St. Paul's others, as attested to even by St. Peter himself!" It took many readings for me to formulate even a limited understanding of this passage, but it was meaningful to attempt it.

Romans 7 is addressed to a people who live in a highly regulated society, so they are accustomed to law and retribution. In this chapter, Paul focuses on the place of law, not in civil society, but in Christian belief. In his examination of human nature and the natural tendency to sin, what some commentators refer to as "natural" law, he complains "For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do." He seems to dismiss the codified law, especially the 10 Commandments, as a guide to salvation. From his point of view, following the rules is, of course, expected; it is just not enough to save us from sin. In fact, he claims that sometimes examining the rules leads to sin because they suggest temptations not considered before, and, he says, sinful human beings are likely to yield. Things that are prohibited become more attractive to us just because they're prohibited.

Paul's focus, unlike Jeremiah's, is not on avoiding punishment for sin. He doesn't mention the consequences of the sins he bemoans, except the wretchedness he feels for having sinned. Instead, his focus is on a new understanding of his relationship with God through trust in Christ. The law, for him, only goes so far. It's a good guide to behaviour, but it is not the final measure by which we will attain grace. Instead, he points to what he considers the only road to salvation. "Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

This is pretty much the message of Easter, isn't it?

Eleanor Rogers

WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL

Psalms 101, 109:1-4 (5-9), 20-30; Jeremiah 18: 1-11; Romans 8:1-11

I will focus on Psalm 101, as I found the other readings aggressive.

Psalm 101 opens communicating of singing of love and justice, praise and leading a blameless life or heart. I believe this is what we should focus on at this time. There are many concerns at this time personal, provincial, national and international. Love and justice are important factors in all of these concerns.

Later the psalm becomes more hard-nosed, but I believe the opening of singing of love, justice and praise to the Lord are the ideals that ultimately carry through the remainder of the text. Yes, there is silencing those who slander, not enduring those of haughty eyes and a proud heart, not standing in the presence of deceitful or false speakers and silencing all the wicked of the land. However, verse six talks about keeping one's eyes on the faithful.

Faith can come from many backgrounds beyond Christianity. Faith includes not only tolerance of good, just people once considered pariahs, but respecting and loving their lifestyles and decisions. In Canada, not so long-ago unwed mothers were often kept in officially sanctioned residences for unmarried women and coerced to have their children adopted – some were unknowingly sterilized. Members of the LGBTQ community were arrested, denied accommodation or employment, or forced to live circumspect lives well beyond changes to legal codes. Accommodation, employment and refuge opportunities were also denied to people of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds and continue even today. Elsewhere, women can be murdered for wearing what their family deem 'too' revealing, but this accepted traditional form of femicide often goes unchecked in many largely Christian countries. And what about those who were criminally convicted for minor misdemeanours that are now not criminal (e.g., modest use of marijuana), but who still carry the stigma?

During Lent we need to sing praise and open our hearts to not only those who lead traditional blameless lives, but also to those who formerly were condemned.

Edgar Tumak

THURSDAY 3 APRIL

Psalm 69, 1-23 and 31-38; Jeremiah 22, 13-23; Romans 8, 12-27

It always surprises me how, on many days, all of the readings seem to be so negative. Often when I start to write my Prayers of the People, I have the same response: we are asking for relief or avoidance from so many negatives.

Today's Psalm 69, for instance starts: "Save me, O Lord, for the waters are come in upon my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing ... I am weary of my crying: They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head". By the thirteenth verse, the writer becomes more positive: "...my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy, hear me..."

In the Prayers of the People, we ask for our shortcomings, and the misfortunes of others, to be forgiven. In a verse omitted from today's reading (verse 30) the writer promises "I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify him with thanksgiving". And then (verse 31) "This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock... The Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners." (verse 33)

Jeremiah's God is also negative saying to Jehoiakim: "Woe unto him who buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." But the Lord does remind Jehoiakim, who is building the house, (actually a palace) that his father "judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him; "was this not to know me?" saith the Lord". I realize that these were people living in harsh times in an unforgiving country, who needed some support from God to keep them positive. But at times I really wish that they did not have to ask for so much relief. Even today, hard as we try, it seems, we must always try harder.

Later, with Christ's teachings now in mind, St. Paul can more positive: "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Or, as a modern translation (New Living Translation) makes a little clearer "... you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the Power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

So perhaps our Prayers of the People indeed should be our asking for help to put to death our sinful deeds, and those of the whole world.

Peter Gower

FRIDAY 4 APRIL

REGINALD HEBER, BISHOP OF CALCUTTA, 1826

Psalm 102; Jeremiah 23:1-8; Romans 8:28-39

On first reading the selections assigned to this day, I was struck by the theological and poetic intensity in each of them. Surprisingly, however, although all implicitly or directly fear the negative influences of the flesh on the life of the spirit, all end on a positive if not triumphant note.

The gloss given at the beginning of Psalm 102 in the King James version states: "*A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is over whelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.*" The psalmist indeed says that he is "as a sparrow alone upon the house top," and (twice) that his "heart is ... withered like grass," but at the middle of the psalm, he abruptly changes direction: "But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever." The last half of the psalm is a paean of praise to God who will not "despise ... the prayers of the destitute."

The passage from Jeremiah begins "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" From Verse 3 on, however, the Lord promises to gather his scattered sheep, feed them, and set up faithful shepherds. In addition, in an extended and lyrical passage, the Lord promises to "raise unto David a righteous branch ... [who] shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNES," an often quoted passage taken as a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, showing God's love for his people.

The first part of Chapter 8 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is an extended discussion of those who live by the flesh and those who live by the spirit in which it is made clear that those who live by the flesh shall die. But in the middle of the chapter, at the beginning of our selection, comes the rapturous statement that "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." The rest of our selection is theologically dense. It also presents the words that worry any student of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as many a theologian, words concerning foreknowledge, predestination, justification, and election. At the end of the chapter St. Paul caps his theological argument, saying that his far-ranging flock are "accounted as sheep for the slaughter," but he intensifies his rhetoric:

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All of the authors deal with the difficulties of life, especially of the spiritual life, and all, in their very separate circumstances and time frames, hold steadfast to a belief in God's love for his creation.

Marion McKeown

SATURDAY 5 APRIL

EMILY AYCHBOWM, FOUNDESS OF THE COMMUNITY
OF THE SISTERS OF THE CHURCH, 1870

Psalms 107:33-43, 108:1-6 (7-13); Jeremiah 23:9-15; Romans 9:1-18

In reading the prophet Jeremiah's lamentation about how the people of Israel have fallen prey to false gods, immorality and all things that violate God's Law, one cannot help but draw an analogy to our own age. It also causes one to think about what prophets in the Old Testament and through history are there for.

Richard Rohr recently wrote a few reflections on the prophets. He noted that then and now there was a deep need for someone who would call the people to return to God and to justice. The Biblical prophets were the truth tellers for centuries, trying to turn Israel back to God, and warning them of the consequences if they did not. Jeremiah warns of the false prophets, the people who claim they speak for the Lord, but in fact are leading the people astray. Further, Jeremiah portends a godly reckoning for those who lead the people in unrighteousness. Does this not speak to us today? Running through my mind is that line from the 60's anthem, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?": when will they ever learn?

The prophets warn us, and if we listen and return to the law, the psalms tell us, yes! When we follow the law, when we glorify God, He walks with us. "When the people are diminished and brought low through oppression, trouble and sorrow, He pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes;" and, "Your steadfast love is higher than the heavens and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds." St Paul in his letter tells the Romans that following God's law will bring His mercy. The reading from Jeremiah may be bleak, but it is mitigated by the praise of the psalms and the words of Paul. We know God is with us because He continues to send his prophets to us; in this winter of 2025 let us celebrate the courage and compassion of Episcopal Bishop Mariann Budde, one who does not hesitate to speak truth to power in this era of chaos. Amen.

Jane Kirkpatrick

SUNDAY 6 APRIL

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Psalm 118; Jeremiah 23:16-32; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

The reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written at a time when Corinth was known for its widespread immorality and a variety of religions. Paul says, "While working with the Jews, I live like a Jew in order to win them In the same way, when working with Gentiles, I live like a Gentile Among the weak in faith I become weak like one of them, in order to win them. So I become all things to all people, that I may save some of them by whatever means are possible" (*Good News Bible*). And he explains, "All this I do for the gospel's sake, in order to share in its blessings." At first glance it might seem that this is someone who is trying to manipulate others by pretending to be what they are not. However, after reading it a second time I saw a different meaning. It really is about being present with those you are interacting with, and respecting the diversity that exists in groups. It is about having some level of empathy for those who are different from us. By being there for those with whom we are interacting, by showing compassion and understanding for different perspectives, we are in fact living the Gospel.

This reading made me think about my own life and the work that I do with others, many of whom are going through difficult times in their lives; they are often marginalized and have at times made very problematic decisions resulting in family breakdowns and criminal charges. How easy would it be just to be judgmental and say that they created their own problems? How easy would it be to say they do not deserve compassion? How easy would it be to say that it is their own fault they are marginalized? However, what good would ever come from taking that approach? Being able to look beyond this judgment-based approach and to be present and focused on what is going on for these people is so much more productive. To be able to look beyond what bad decisions they have made and to see each person as a unique individual is so much more about living the Gospel. For me it is not quite as Paul said, for it is not about living as they do, but instead about looking at them and having empathy, concern and respect. How often in our lives we encounter situations or people who are different from us, culturally, morally, socio-economically, and in a variety of other ways. We need to be aware that each of us is just one person and that our world is made up of all kinds of different people, who all come with different life experiences. We must remember that we are all God's children and part of the same family, and that so much more is gained by showing love and respect for others regardless of our differences. It is what Jesus would teach us to do, and as Christians we need to do as Christ would want us to do.

Kevin Raison

MONDAY 7 APRIL

Psalm 31; Jeremiah 24:1-10; Romans 9:19-33

I've chosen to comment on the reading from Romans for today's reflection. I found this reading very challenging and on the surface contradictory to my understanding of the teachings of Jesus.

Paul wrote the Book of Romans some fifty years after the birth of Christ. He was in the process of spreading the teachings of Jesus to the uncommitted with the intent of conversion. Extreme interpretations were probably used to make a point, as is the case today. Thus, he says that God reserves the right to show mercy to some and not others.

I was drawn to verse 21 which states:

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour.”

In this analogy one vessel represents good while the other represents evil. Our world contains both vessels and we are free to drink from either.

We humans were created and blessed with wisdom and powers of reason. These unique characteristics have evolved through time and continue to this day and into the future. We need to use these gifts to make the appropriate choice from which vessel we are to drink.

To guide us we, as Christians, must use the teachings of Jesus, which are fundamentally love, tolerance and forgiveness. In the end the choice is ours as individuals and as a group.

As I was reflecting on this Reading, President Carter's funeral was taking place. He certainly did his best to drink from the “vessel” of good. I wonder what “vessel” the current President is drinking from?

This Lent, let us drink from those “vessels” which will make a positive contribution to our community, country and world so that in our final days, we can all say we did our best.

Larry Norman

TUESDAY 8 APRIL

Psalms [120], 121, 122, 123; Jeremiah 25:8-17; Romans 10:1-13

The Lenten journey is akin to pilgrimage; an intentional journey to a special destination for the purpose of seeking and experiencing God. During Lent, we are invited to intentionally break away from our normal routines and lay aside life's distractions so that we might focus on the spiritual journey to Jerusalem and the Cross. Such a journey is challenging and costly, but not without reward. Jerusalem is derived from the Hebrew words "yarah" and "shalom", meaning "to lay a foundation" and "peace". What Jesus endured and overcame on the Cross more than 2000 years ago in Jerusalem not only laid a foundation for peace, but accomplished it through His salvation. While pilgrimage is challenging, we can trust that it is nevertheless life-changing and brings us ever closer to Christ.

Today's Psalms are part of the *Book of Pilgrim Songs* (Ps. 120-134), or as some Bibles annotate, the *Songs of Ascent*. It is likely that these Psalms were sung and recited by Jewish pilgrims while on their way to the Temple in Jerusalem for major festivals such as Passover or Shavuot (Pentecost). Some scholars say these Psalms represent the ascent, or climb, that a pilgrim must make to reach the Temple. The *Songs of Ascent* are therefore progressive, starting from low place of concern and lament (Ps. 120) and arriving at a high and holy place of harmony (Ps. 134). As you read or sing these Psalms, you are doing so with the voices of the faithful throughout the generations; pilgrim voices who seek and experience the Lord's help, favour, and guidance.

Now five weeks into Lent I wonder, where along the pilgrim way do you find yourself? Perhaps these Psalms will help you to reflect and engage in prayerful conversation with the Lord.

Are you facing a particular hardship?

"In my distress I cry to the Lord; that he may answer me." 120:1

Are you dealing with a situation of interpersonal conflict?

"I am for peace; but when I speak they are for war." 120:7

Are you feeling weary, unsure if your legs can make the climb, or unsure if your faith can carry you through?

"I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." 121:1-2

Maybe you are feeling motivated and joyful, sensing you are getting close to your destination, the dwelling place of the Lord.

“I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!” Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.” 122:1-2

Or perhaps in approaching the presence of the Lord, are you drawn to your knees in prayer; to intercede for yourself, for others, for the world?

“Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
for we have had more than enough of contempt.” 123:3

Fellow pilgrims, let us take heart as we continue our Lenten journey. Today, let us take one more step on the path to ascend to that most holy and peaceful destination, to Christ our Lord and Saviour.

A Pilgrim's Prayer (Anonymous)

God of our pilgrimage, you have given us a desire to take the questing way and set out on our journey. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, that whatever we encounter as we travel, we may seek to glorify you by the way we live. Amen.

The Reverend Claire Bramma, *Chaplain, Royal Military College*

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL

WILLIAM LAW, PRIEST & SPIRITUAL LEADER, 1761
Psalm 119: 145-176; Jeremiah 25: 30-38; Romans 10: 14-21

In troubled times, where do we look for comfort? When the rules-based order fails, where can we turn for justice? These very modern concerns worried one of the psalm writers some 2,500 years ago as he found himself surrounded by adversaries, wicked people, and persecuting princes on all sides. The psalmist's response? “With my whole heart I cry, answer me, O LORD, I will keep your statutes.” Where humans lie and break faith, God's law is eternal and his promises steadfast.

Psalm 119 offers many words to describe God's will: statutes, precepts, decrees, commandments, and ordinances. But why so many legalistic terms to describe our relationship with the Almighty? Is God a mere tyrant dashing off executive orders from his heavenly throne? The psalmist does not seem to think so, for “I love your law.” The shades of meaning contained within these synonyms allude to the many ways in which God's will manifests in our lives if we care to look.

However, this search is not easy; the psalmist rises before dawn to plead for the LORD's help, he praises his righteous ordinances seven times a day, then meditates on God's promise

through the night. Despite the seemingly heavy burden of these demands, the psalmist is joyful. His “lips pour forth praise” because God teaches him his statutes, revealing the truth hidden behind the legal jargon. God’s law is not an imposition, but an unbreakable promise of salvation. In following God’s will, we discover the truth of our own divine nature.

William Law, in his “A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,” makes the connection between God’s commandments and our actions explicit: “For any ways of life, any employment of our talents, whether of our parts, our time, or money, that is not strictly according to the will of God, that is not for such ends as are suitable to His glory, are as great absurdities and failings, as prayers that are not according to the will of God.” Too often we draw an arbitrary distinction between the sacred and the secular. We pray in quiet churches or in bedrooms, but the word of God is drowned out in the cacophony of cable news and social media with its endless drone of Us versus Them. But as Paul says, Christ’s word transcends these manmade boundaries, for it has gone out to all the earth. We must embody the good news in our prayers and actions, not because these things are easy, but because they are right.

And if we defy God’s will, what then? Jeremiah minces no words: “The LORD has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh and the guilty will be put to the sword.” Terrifying stuff, but he reserves his fiercest anger for the unfaithful leaders who put their greed and pride above the will of God: “Roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter have come.” Therefore, when the forces of inequity seem unstoppable, delight in God’s precepts, because only his “righteous ordinances endure forever,” while those who persecute without cause shall become “dung on the surface of the ground.”

Thanks be to God.

Alan Wright

THURSDAY 10 APRIL

Psalms 131, 132 [133]; Jeremiah 26:1-16; Romans 11:1-12

The reader-writer is asked to read and reflect on the assigned passages of the day. Then the reader-writer needs to express those reflections in written format. This happens so that others can reflect on the reader-writer's reflections and the passages of the day. Keep in mind reflections are very personal.

I must confess when I first read the passages for today, I was very weary, struggling to remain positive and extremely worried. I felt like I was reading meaningless words. I wanted to be reading the twenty-third psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." This is a psalm that I always find comforting and reassuring. However, after a few deep breaths and a second reading the passages became relevant.

Jeremiah has been referred to as the weeping prophet and he certainly had many happenings in his life to make him weep. The people to whom he was prophesying were not the best listeners, there was political unrest and he himself was physically and emotionally attacked. Yet he continued for forty years to encourage the chosen people to draw closer and be at one with their God. The passage today has the Lord pleading with his people to change their ways. He has not forsaken them even though they have forsaken Him. Jeremiah is God's voice.

Paul writes to the Romans from Corinth He has yet to visit Rome and tells the people of his desire to do so. He expresses the thought, it does not matter that they have varied backgrounds, they are one in Christ. It takes open minds and a genuine caring for others to accept differences in one another. This was a very important message not only in Paul's time but today as well. The world at this moment in time is witnessing the targeting of ethnic, religious and other groups of people not only by the common man but those holding offices of power.

I re-read the psalms of the day. Psalms 120 to 134 are classified as the Ascent Psalms, so I read the psalms in their entirety. Some of the psalms were written by David, {the psalms for today are attributed to him} one at least by Solomon and the others are by unknown authors. David expressed in these psalms the desire to be at one with his God. This is a linking thread in the readings of the day even though this thread is expressed in varied patterns.

The Ascent Psalms were sung by the Hebrew people as they made their ascent to Jerusalem for Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Singing the songs with family and friends as they made their way upwards to be with their God made the journey more joyful and less

stressful. “May the road rise up to meet you” is the beginning of the well-known Irish blessing. The unknown writer knew the road of life was not always travelled with ease. The road is a mixture of joy and sorrow. The last line of the blessing is, “May God hold you in the palm of his hand.” We are held safe in God's loving hands as we travel on our Life's journey.

So it was with the Hebrew people, they made the journey singing the Ascent Psalms over rocky and upwards terrain, knowing their loving God was with them. The Ascent Psalms also brought to mind the end of Christina Rossetti's touching poem “Up-Hill”:

Shall I find comfort, travel- sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea beds for all who come.

I am still weary, tired and worried but I found comfort, strength and hope reflecting on the passages for today. “May God grant us the strength and courage to honour the dignity of every human being, to speak the truth to one another in love, and walk humbly with each other and our God.” — Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde.

Mary Ann Steen

FRIDAY 11 APRIL
GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN,
FIRST MISSIONARY BISHOP OF NEW ZEALAND, 1878
Psalm 22; Jeremiah 29:1, 4-13; Romans 11:13-24

How many times have you moved somewhere else in your life? Maybe you left the home shared with your parents and siblings because it was time for you to find full time work. Possibly you decided that you needed to attend school either in another part of your town/city or an entirely new and unfamiliar location. Perhaps an employer required a move or maybe you just decided that it was time for a change!

Whatever the reason for a move, I would suggest that a feeling of trepidation and uncertainty might have been a prominent feature of one's internal conversation. I know it has been for me. Dealing with the disruption of a regular schedule, finding directions and simply reorganising the minutiae of life, settling children/pets and meeting and creating a supportive community to live within are just some of the huge tasks that accompany moving.

Yet this passage from Jeremiah causes me to take heart each time we move, and it's been a few! It's like a "How to move" prescription. V.5 "...settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce." V. 7 "... seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." And my favourite verse:

V. 11 "...For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,"
plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Hindsight being what it is and now having a much longer view of it than the forward-looking direction, I know that God has had plans for me throughout my life. I can clearly see His work in presenting new communities to live in where my service is needed. The Lenten challenge for me is to listen carefully enough to hear God's voice clearly in this new community of Kingston. What God's asking me to do with the talents and gifts that I've been blessed with is very different than me charging on with what I enjoy doing!

With no current plans to move from Kingston, I will continue to listen and serve those who God has put in my way.

Jacky Stephen

SATURDAY 12 APRIL

Psalms 137:1-6 (7-9), 144; Jeremiah 31:27-34; Romans 11:25-36

Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem



This painting is considered to be one of Rembrandt's finest works. It depicts the prophet Jeremiah in a dejected state, as his beloved city of Jerusalem is consumed by flames and the temple reduced to rubble in 586 BCE. Jeremiah had seen his people through the worst of times – Judah's rebellion, the fall of Judah to the Babylonians and the destruction of Jerusalem. To his great despair, the people had not heeded his warnings to turn away from sin and they had suffered the consequences. As a result of his deep sorrow, Jeremiah is known as "The Weeping Prophet". In the painting, Jerusalem is burning in the lower left corner while Jeremiah himself is surrounded by darkness and gloom. The only bright spot is the precious metal recovered from the temple that glows in his lap – did Rembrandt paint this as a sign of hope?

Today's passage marks an important shift in the teachings of Jeremiah where he finally delivers a message of hope to the beleaguered community. His prophesy is two-fold. Although his people believed that they were being punished for the sins of their ancestors, Jeremiah declares that intergenerational sin will be no more. This remission of the sins of past generations gives the survivors and their descendants an opportunity to start over and rebuild. Generations will no longer suffer for the sins of their forebears, but rather, it will be the individual who will be responsible for his or her own sins. Secondly, God speaks further through Jeremiah as he prophesies another shift from communal to personal relationship. No longer will the covenant exist externally on stone tablets but God will instead establish a new covenant with his people and will engrave his laws on their hearts and in their minds, so that they might know, love and obey him. A personal relationship with God will be guided by an internal voice.

Although it was six hundred years before the birth of Christ, in this passage Jeremiah foretells the new covenant – that God will have a personal relationship with each one of us and that through Jesus, our sins will be forgiven. It was as much a balm to the hearts and souls of a desperate people then, as it is to us today.

Anne Case

Concert Today: April 12, 3pm
Charles Wood's *St Mark Passion*

SUNDAY 13 APRIL

THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY

Psalms 24, 29; Zechariah 9:9-12; 1 Timothy 6:12-16

Today we look at two psalms, both thought to have been written by David.

Psalms 24 and 29 were believed to have been composed upon his bringing the ark of God into the tabernacle. David had built this tabernacle for the ark's resting place. Psalm 24 speaks of the sovereignty of God. Psalm 29 was written during a thunderstorm with lots of lightning and thunder and rain. This psalm asks us to observe God's power and dominion over the world, and His care for the church.

The prophet Zechariah's name means "Yahweh has remembered." Not much is actually known about him except that he was a priest. He lived during the time of Judah's restoration and rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem around 520 to 470 BC. His ministry was to those who returned from exile in Babylon. He called them to repent and find spiritual renewal, when they were filled with despair and spiritual apathy. Almost seventy years after being exiled, the Israelites were experiencing hardship and wondering if the prophetic promises would ever be fulfilled. Zechariah's message foretold of the King (Jesus) riding a colt and bringing peace, not warfare, to all the nations from sea to sea.

The Old Testament doesn't indicate how Zechariah died. But in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 23, Jesus mentions Zechariah in his condemnation of 1st Century Jewish leaders. He stated that Zechariah was murdered in the temple courtyard by those he had encouraged to rebuild the temple.

The First Letter to Timothy offers practical and pastoral advice from the aging apostle, Paul, to a young pastor he mentored. Timothy's mother was a devout Jew and his father a Greek. He was brought up in the Jewish tradition. At the time Paul wrote this first letter, Timothy was working in the church at Ephesus. Paul had originally met Timothy ten years prior, and was impressed by his qualities of respect and knowledge. Paul advised and instructed Timothy on appropriate conduct in worship gatherings, the qualifications of the elders and deacons, and on church discipline.

Paul's Letter shows us those things he hoped Timothy would address in his ministry—including perseverance and to "fight the good fight." This meant making a choice to pursue God's Will and a life of faith on a daily basis. We sing a well-known hymn written by John S. B. Monsell in 1863: "Fight the good fight with all thy might." It is known by two tunes, 'Pentecost,' composed by William Boyd, and 'Duke Street' by John W. Hatton.

All these readings give us a background to Jesus's triumphant ride through the streets on Palm Sunday.

Diana Fletcher

MONDAY 14 APRIL

Psalm 1:1-18; Jeremiah 12:2-16; Philippians 3:1-14

“There is nothing that the holy Ghost doth so much labour in all the Scriptures to beat into men's heads, as repentance, amendment of life, and speedy returning unto the Lord GOD of hostes.” (From Homily 20, *Of Repentance and of True Reconciliation unto God*; see Article 35 Of the Articles of Religion.)

Penitence may be made a deliberate and disciplined intention, as enjoined upon us in the 16th-century homily. But it may also burst forth, urgent and unbidden, from a stricken heart. It is this latter experience that is portrayed, privately, after Nathan's prophetic charge to King David (II Samuel 12:1-13). David, led by the Spirit, turned his private confession into a public testimony in Psalm 51, today's reading. Psalm 51 lays bare the literal and spiritual anatomy of the experience, directed step by step by the Holy Spirit, of true repentance and reconciliation to God.

The cry for pardon has deep roots in David's past experiences of God's loving kindness and the abundance of his tender mercies (verse 1). The plea is for an inward and spiritual cleansing as well as a washing of outward appearances (verse 2). True confession reverses our habit of putting our sins behind us; they are now seen face to face (verse 3). It is not the law but the Giver of the law who has been offended (verse 4). The true child of God acknowledges his descent from Adam, “shapen in wickedness,” in a lament for innocence lost (verse 5). David clearly recognizes the desire of God, “from whom no secrets are hid” for truth in the hidden parts of our lives (verse 6).

Memory prompts lost experiences of joy and gladness, since shattered by brokenness (verse 8). The penitent contemplates with dread the loss of God's very presence. Verse 12 records a boldness as David pleads for the restoration of a joy once lost. His desire to share the Gospel itself blossoms in verse 13. Deeper reflection calls up actual blood guiltiness, and the lost chance for amendment, alas too late in this case. David asks for a loosened tongue, and opened lips to publish the just fame of divine forgiveness (verse 15). A plea for personal pardon expands to a longing for the welfare of all of God's people and the restoration of true public worship: “Build thou the walls of Jerusalem” refers to the larger

community of faith (verses 18-19). David rejoices in his past experience of God's welcome to troubled spirits and broken hearts (verse 17).

If David in his time, "a man after God's own heart," learned these lessons from the Holy Spirit, how much more should we, the disciples of "great David's Greater Son," study to rend our hearts? To be shriven is to be subdued; but it is also to be stirred and strengthened for grateful loving service. Another important personal result of laying hold upon mercy is to find renewed assurance of, and confidence in, God's promises. Finally, and not least, the experience of true penitence may well provide armour against our next inevitable encounter with the enemy of our own souls:

Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies
But the blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries.

Oft as it is sprinkled
On our guilty hearts
Satan in confusion
Terror-struck, departs. ("Glory be to Jesus," Caswell, alt.)

This week, across a worldwide Christendom, two beloved musical compositions will accompany special liturgical services: Father Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere* will close the Office of Tenebrae. Good Friday recitals of J.S.Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* will include *Erbarme dich, mein Gott*, portraying drop by drop the bitter tears of Peter's repentance for his denial of Jesus, moments after the second piercing cock-crow. Can we doubt that these two musicians gave voice to their own personal experiences of penitence?

Harley Smyth

TUESDAY 15 APRIL

Psalms 6, 12; Jeremiah 15:10-21; Philippians 3:15-21

These passages speak strongly to me of God's love for his people, but a love that has some expectations in return. God does not reward evil, but rather rewards those who follow God's will. We are all tested, and many give an appearance of good, but it does not come from the heart, and God can also punish those who deliberately ignore his will. We all can follow God if we try, but "high living" can be a temptation to stray. Those who follow the ways of the world and do not respect the ways of God may find there is a price to pay. I am particularly moved by God's "adoption" of those who come to him. We are a nation of refugees, if not in the current generations, then in our ancestry. My own father came to Canada as a refugee, my mother came as a war bride, also displaced. But they embraced this country, as we do, and as our current influx of refugees is doing. Thanks be to God for all he does for us! When I look back over my life I can see the times that God has tested us. Our first major test I felt "why did this happen to us?" But my immediate answer was "why not?" We were not immune to bad things happening just because we trusted God. Over the years we had many opportunities to be tested, but we knew that God would bind up our wounds and continue to lead us to where we should be. When we look at the state our world is in today, we can be overwhelmed by the problems facing people around the world. Many of them are problems caused by those in power who misuse that power, and don't consider the effect on others as important. They look to protect themselves and their friends. Wanting to take over someone else's country and change it to meet their personal standards...definitely evil. Throwing out refugees, and even their families, is another evil. Cutting back on social services so people have no food or shelter is another. If we truly are followers of Christ we have a responsibility to those less fortunate. Let us all try to be the best we can be as we worship God. I thank God for programs like Lunch By George, and others offering shelter to help people get back on their feet. Our lives don't always go the way we planned, but we can help them to go the way God has planned.

Theo Bruce

WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL

Psalm 55 Jeremiah 17:5-10, 14-17; Philippians 4:1-13

In the year of drought it is not anxious and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Born into a world of turbulence and chaos when the cruelties of those in power fed on the weak and the oppressed, Jeremiah comes across as a serious man for serious times. There is not much joy to be found in this most severe and austere of prophets.

Yet there are small glimmers of hope sprinkled throughout his writing and we have stumbled onto one here. He uses a powerful image that those of us in the land of lakes perhaps don't quite appreciate—a tree planted in the desert flourishing and bearing fruit. Growing in a desert is no mean feat. It takes many years of surviving drought, flash floods, lightning strikes and pest invasions to flourish in the desert. It takes patience growing roots; not too fast so that they are over-extended but not too slowly either to ensure the plant has access to nutrients. It takes knowing when to produce flowers and seeds and knowing when to conserve energy. It is tough work in a strange and hostile environment.

I feel that I am currently in a desert surrounded by what I consider to be a mad and cruel world, and I do look to my faith for answers. Unfortunately the answer is clear and resounding and not one I particularly want to hear. The answer for me is, do deeds of love. I find this answer a little buried in Jeremiah but it rings through the gospels and the epistles. In today's letter Paul is positively fizzing with joy. He speaks to us of what we can do to grow in the desert and it boils down to this: perform acts of love.

Acts of love are hard, especially when we want to pull the blankets over our heads; so the challenge is to do them anyway. Acts of love are different for all of us. They take time and effort and often, speaking for myself, I do not want to do them. It starts for me with little things like the laundry and dinner. It sometimes requires big things like speaking to my students about hard scary topics in a way that is non-threatening. Not that I believe that all these small acts will instantly transform the world, but they will help me grow and be fruitful. It will make my small corner of the world, the small patch of the Kingdom of God, a little less cruel and a little less mad.

Paul reminds us that it is through acts of kindness and love that we bear fruit and become a community. He assures us that in this “the God of peace will be with us.” Perhaps we will still be anxious about these troubled times, but we will be actively working and seeking for something different. And that is the only place to start.

Vanessa Michael

THURSDAY 17 APRIL

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Psalm 102; Jeremiah 20: 7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 27-32

Maundy Thursday, the day before the catastrophe of Good Friday, is shadowed by the approaching agony of our Lord, so vividly reflected in the texts which Jesus must have known, in the Psalm for this day, and in the verses from Jeremiah 20. He may have even been saying them to Himself as he celebrated his last Passover with His disciples, his soul pierced with the knowledge of the agony to come, while still affirming that God was with him “like a terrifying warrior.”

For us, these two millennia later, this day is a commemoration of that Last Passover evening, when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, and in an act of supreme humility washed the feet of his disciples, not because they needed it, but because it was a powerful act of servant leadership. In Jesus’ day, it was slaves who washed the feet of their masters, so for Him to wash the feet of his friends, Jesus forever showed us an example of selflessness and service to others. In the Middle Ages, bishops, abbots and noblemen washed the feet of the poor on Maundy Thursday. In 1572, Queen Elizabeth 1st washed the feet of thirty-nine poor people at Greenwich Palace. James 2nd was the last monarch to do it in person, but after that it was taken up by the Archbishop of York as the Sovereign’s representative. In our Cathedral tonight, it’s the Bishop who washes our feet, in imitation of the action of Christ.

I came to foot washing late, years after becoming an Anglican. Foot washing was almost non-existent in the Mennonite Church of my youth. In fact it was here at St. George’s Cathedral, 7 years ago, when, as I took my seat at the beginning of the service on a Maundy Thursday evening, the late and dearly missed Carl Redmond, one of our Servers, tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I wouldn’t volunteer to have my feet washed. I sensed that few people actually go up to the altar, take off shoes and socks, and have the Bishop do the deed. I was one of a hesitant three that evening to do so, and I felt very exposed and, frankly, awkward. It is above all a very intimate act, done before others, and which is why I like this painting, attributed to the Dutch painter, Jan Lievens (1607-1674), who was in the circle of Rembrandt. It’s a night scene, the disciples are mere shadowy figures out of the brilliant circle of light that illuminates Jesus. He looks very young and exposed at this moment, a moment when he is utterly alone in this act of humility, and in what he is about to face.



How can we know what our Lord suffered as the shadows gathered around Him and his tiny circle of disciples, if we don't literally act out what he asked us to do in imitation of Him, and in honour of His example? Yes we are out of our comfort zone, big time, and that's the point. Jesus' action may have been outside his own comfort zone as well, and it must have been dramatically unusual, perhaps even disturbing, to his disciples that He washed their feet. But the gravity of this moment must be brought home to us in the most dramatic way, a way that makes us feel in sympathy with our Lord's approaching humiliation and death. For that is why we come to our Cathedral on Maundy Thursday, to be acquainted again with this Man of Sorrows, with his grief, and to know in our very marrow that He took upon Himself the iniquity of us all, so that we might be saved.

Eric Friesen

FRIDAY 18 APRIL

GOOD FRIDAY

Psalm 22; 1 Peter 1:10-20 or John 13:36-38

“Simon Peter asked him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus replied, ‘Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.’ Peter asked, ‘Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ Then Jesus answered, ‘Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!’”
John 13: 36-38

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke each record a version of Jesus’ naming Peter as the rock on which the church—the eternal community of God with humanity—would be built. All four of the Gospels then go on to describe how, at the very first sign of danger, that rock seemed to crumble. On the morning of his arrest, at a time when Jesus arguably most needed the support of his closest friends and followers, Peter would deny him three times before the rooster had crowed.

At first glance this is a story of Peter’s hubris and downfall: promising what he ultimately could not live up to. Perhaps we see something of ourselves reflected in that story too, in our yearning to be perfectly Christlike, and in the realization that we almost certainly won’t be. Within each of us, and consequently within the world we share, there exists a real and meaningful gap between what should be and what is.

It’s in that gap that the cross of Christ stands, confronting us this Good Friday with the terrible truth of sin and of the suffering it causes; calling us to honest self-reflection, and to the repentance that encourages us to learn and to grow.

But there, standing before the cross and reading Peter’s story a second time, we realize an even greater truth: that Jesus, knowing full well who Peter was, named him the bearer of community anyway! And that is the story of our hope! The community of heaven and earth is not built on Peter’s perfection, or on ours. It is built on our capacity to recognize where there is suffering, and pain, and brokenness; where lives have been diminished and marginalized; where the image of God has not been reflected—to go there, to stand with one another, and to bear one another up. It is in honesty and acceptance that we learn to love one another as Christ has loved us; in vulnerability and humility that we recognize ourselves as children of God together. It is there, with Peter, that we lay down our lives for the God who is eternally amongst us. And, in the words of our ancient liturgy, it is there, weeping at the grave, that we make our song: alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

The Very Reverend Doug Michael, *Dean & Rector*

SATURDAY 19 APRIL

EASTER EVE

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24;
Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16; 1 Peter 4:1-8; Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

But the end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.
1 Peter 4: 7, 8.

So what exactly IS charity? It's a multifaceted word with many definitions, but the overall consensus seems to be that charity is, in fact, love—yet another multifaceted word. This century has become an era of fear and loneliness. Fear and loneliness for many can prove deadly. Peter is asking us to counteract this gloom and despair by directing love—that is feelings of warmth, affection and support—to the rest of humankind. That includes a lot of strangers. Once, when my daughter was a small child, she was asked what a stranger was. Her answer, “It’s someone you haven’t met yet.” It is for us to remember that a stranger is not “one of them.” They are “one of us.” It should not be difficult for us to smile or give a friendly remark to reach out to others, even strangers; to offer help when help is needed, to give money if you have it to give, but always to give of yourself. This is charity, and charity can save lives, sooth sorrow, ease pain and provide comfort and hope. Peter also reminds us that it can cover a “multitude of sins” as well!

Muriel Smith

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**HOLY WEEK & EASTER
AT ST GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL**

St Mark Passion – Charles Wood
Saturday, April 12 – 3pm

Palm Sunday Holy Eucharist
Sunday, April 13 – 8am & 10:30am

Holy Eucharist with the Renewal of Clergy Vows
Tuesday, April 15 – 12pm

Wednesday in Holy Week
There is no Choral Evensong on this day.

Maundy Thursday Solemn Choral Eucharist
Thursday, April 17 – 7pm

The Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday
Friday, April 18 – 11am

The Great Vigil of Easter
Saturday, April 19 – 8pm

Easter Day Festival Holy Eucharist
Sunday, April 20 – 8am & 10:30am

*For more information or to participate online,
visit www.stgeorgescathedral.ca/lent*