

a pathway into the  
promises and graces  
of God

Lent



# A 2018 Lenten Devotional

Written by the Members and Clergy of  
St Francis Episcopal Church

# List of dates and readings...

Date	1st Reading	Psalms	2nd Reading	Gospel
Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Is 58:1-12	103	2 Cor 5:20b-6:10	Matt 6:1-6, 16, 21
Thu-Feb-15	Habakkuk 3:1-10, 16-18	37:19-42	Phil 3:12-21	John 17:1-8
Fri-Feb-16	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32	31, 35	Phil 4:1-9	John 17:9-19
Sat-Feb-17	Ezekiel 39:21-29	42, 43	Phil 4:10-20	John 17:20-26
Sun-Feb-18	Genesis 9:8-17	25:1-9	1 Peter 3:18-22	Mark 1:9-15
Mon-Feb-19	Genesis 37:1-11	44	1 Cor 1:1-19	Mark 1:1-13
Tue-Feb-20	Genesis 37:12-24	47, 48	1 Cor 1:20-31	Mark 1:14-28
Wed-Feb-21	Genesis 37:25-36	49	1 Cor 2:1-13	Mark 1:29-45
Thu-Feb-22	Genesis 39:1-23	50	1 Cor 2:14-3:15	Mark 2:1-12
Fri-Feb-23	Genesis 40:1-23	51	1 Cor 3:16-23	Mark 2:13-22
Sat-Feb-24	1 Samuel 16:1-13	33	1 John 2:18-25	Acts 20:17-35
Sun-Feb-25	Genesis 17:1-7, 15, 16	22:22-33	Romans 4:13-25	Mark 8:31-38
Mon-Feb-26	Genesis 41:46-57	64, 65	1 Cor 4:8-20	Mark 3:7-19a
Tue-Feb-27	Genesis 42:1-17	68:1-20, 24-36	1 Cor 5:1-8	Mark 3:19b-35
Wed-Feb-28	Genesis 42:18-28	119:73- 96	1 Cor 5:9-6:8	Mark 4:1-20
Thu-Mar-1	Genesis 42:29-38	74	1 Cor 6:12-20	Mark 4:21-34
Fri-Mar-2	Genesis 43:1-15	73	1 Cor 7:1-9	Mark 4:35-41
Sat-Mar-3	Genesis 43:16-34	23, 27	1 Cor 7:10-24	Mark 5:1-20
Sun-Mar-4	Exodus 20:1-17	19	1 Cor 1:18-25	John 2:13-22
Mon-Mar-5	Genesis 44:18-34	77	1 Cor 7:25-31	Mark 5:21-43
Tue-Mar-6	Genesis 45:1-15	78:40-72	1 Cor 7:32-40	Mark 6:1-13
Wed-Mar-7	Genesis 45:16-28	81, 82	1 Cor 8:1-13	Mark 6:13-29
Thu-Mar-8	Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34	85, 86	1 Cor 9:1-15	Mark 6:30-46
Fri-Mar-9	Genesis 47:1-26	91, 92	1 Cor 9:16-27	Mark 6:47-56
Sat-Mar-10	Genesis 47:27- 48:7	87, 90	1 Cor 10:1-13	Mark 7:1-23

<b>Date</b>	<b>1st Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>2nd reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Sun-Mar-11	Numbers 21:4-9	107:1-3, 17-22	Ephesians 2:1-10	John 3:14-21
Mon-Mar-12	Genesis 49:1-28	89:19- 52	1 Cor 10:14-11:1	Mark 7:24-37
Tue-Mar-13	Genesis 49:29- 50:14	94	1 Cor 11:17-34	Mark 8:1-10
Wed-Mar-14	Genesis 50:15-26		1 Cor 12:1-11	Mark 8:11-26
Thu-Mar-15	Exodus 1:6-22	73	1 Cor 12:12-26	Mark 8:27-9:1
Fri-Mar-16	Exodus 2:1-22	107:1- 32	1 Cor 12:27-13:3	Mark 9:2-13
Sat-Mar-17	Exodus 2:23-3:15	33	1 Cor 13:1-13	Mark 9:14-29
Sun-Mar-18	Jeremiah 31:31-34	51:1-13	Hebrews 5:5-10	John 12:20-33
Mon-Mar-19	Isaiah 63:7-16	34	Matthew 1:18-25	Ephesians 3:14-41
Tue-Mar-20	Exodus 5:1-6:1	124, 125, 126	1 Cor 14:20-33a, 39-40	Mark 9:42-50
Wed-Mar-21	Exodus 7:8-24	128, 129, 130	2 Cor 2:14-3:6	Mark 10:1-16
Thu-Mar-22	Exodus 7:25-8:19	140, 142	2 Cor 3:7-18	Mark 10:17-31
Fri-Mar-23	Exodus 9:13-35	141, 143:1- 11	2 Cor 4:1-12	Mark 10:32-45
Sat-Mar-24	Exodus 10:21-11:8	42, 43	2 Cor 4:13-18	Mark 10:46-52
Palm Sunday			Philippians 2:5- 11	Mark 14:1-47
Mon-Mar-26	Lamentations 1:1- 2, 6-12	69:1-23	2 Cor 1:1-7	Mark 11:12-25
Tue-Mar-27	Lamentations 1:17-22	94	2 Cor 1:8-22	Mark 11:27-33
Wed-Mar-28	Lamentations 2:1-9	74	2 Cor 1:23-2:11	Mark 12:1-11
Maundy Thursday	Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14	116:1-2, 12-19	1 Cor 11:23-26	John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Good Friday	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	22	Hebrews 10:16- 25 or 4:14-16; 5:7-9	John 18:1-19:42
Holy Satur- day	Lamentations 3:37-58	27	Hebrews 4:1-16	Romans 8:1-11
Easter Sunday	Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9	118:1-2, 14-24	1 Corinthians 15:1-11	John 20:1-18

# Welcome to Our Lenten Devotional

Dear Fellow Lenten Traveler,

It is that time of the year again... And once again we engage the seasons of Lent and Holy Week together, journeying together through “*Lent: Our Pathway to the Graces and Promises of God*,” our 2018 Lenten theme.

We hope the stories shared in this devotional guide will enrich each of our journeys as we hear together the experiences of God’s grace and promises through you fellow travelers.

We begin on Ash Wednesday and experience the earthiness of ashes and the earthliness of being human. The mark of the cross on our forehead reminds us also of the destination of our journey - God’s love on the cross and God’s hope for us on Easter. And every day in between in this season of Lent is part of the refining and the remembering of who we are, and whose we are.

Our hope is that each day offers moments of deepening in our experience of God’s unrelenting love for us, helping us recognize God’s graces and promises for us in meditating on scripture together and hearing each other’s stories. Together we journey toward Easter once again. It will be a familiar yet also a new journey.

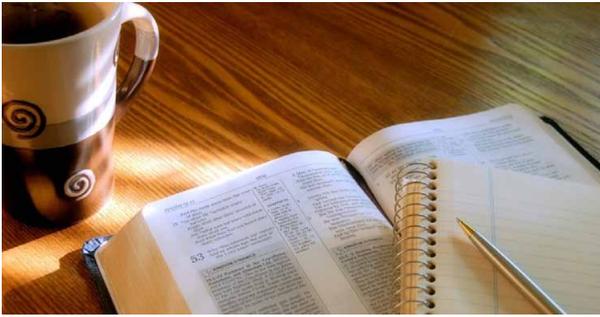
Thank you all for opening your hearts to letting God speak to you through this guide. We don’t take for granted that you are welcoming this devotional guide as part of your Lenten spirituality.

And thank you to those who have shared your stories in this devotional guide for opening your hearts to letting God speak through you. Your devotionals attest to God’s faithfulness, God’s graces and promises lived out in this world.

So, may God speak deeply into your heart this Lenten journey. May we all have a meaningful and Holy Lent together.

**The Rev. Peter Huang &  
Kristina Pelá** (*Devotional Coordinator*)

# How to Have a Devotional Time



A "devotional time" is just as the name suggests - a devoted time of solitude before God, a time without distractions from the everyday life, a time to seek after God and listen to God. Our relationship with God, just like any significant relationship in our lives, needs constant investing - some of which can be done on the run, but growth often depends on time carved out to deliberately seek after God.

Nothing fancy. **Carve out a regular time during your day.** Start with five minutes, but shoot for fifteen. If your schedule is usually packed, you'll have to sacrifice something, but trust me, it'll be worth your while. God wants to speak to you and spend time with you.

**Find a quiet place, a place with minimal distractions** away from visual or audible noise, away from the TV, the computer, the mobile phone. It can all wait.

**Start by a short prayer to invite God's presence.** Clear your mind of racing thoughts. Feel free to pray this prayer or pray a simple prayer from your heart.

*Dear God, I come before you this day to meet you.  
Quiet my heart so that I may be still before you.  
Hear the prayers of my heart,  
O Lord, and speak your word and your presence to me.  
Speak now, for your servant is listening.*

**Read the passages prescribed for the day.** If you have time, read them once to get familiar with them. Then read them again to see how the passages might be speaking to you personally - for that specific day, specific moment, specific circumstances in your life, specific to you.

If time is more limited on a particular day, meditate on the passage that the writer has focused on. **Then read the reflection and the message conveyed through the writer.**

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What might this reflection and the passages be stirring up in you and how they might be challenging you to live the day differently? If it helps, jot your thoughts down in a journal. Except for Easter, on Sundays we offer a song or a hymn for you to read (or sing!), to soak in, to reflect on.

**End with a prayer time** - pray regarding how God had spoken to you through the scripture passages, the devotional piece, and/or your reflection time. Pray also for any needs that you may have in your life and also for the needs of the people around you. Pray for our church, pray for our nation, pray for those beyond our walls. If you'd like, end with the Prayer of St. Francis:

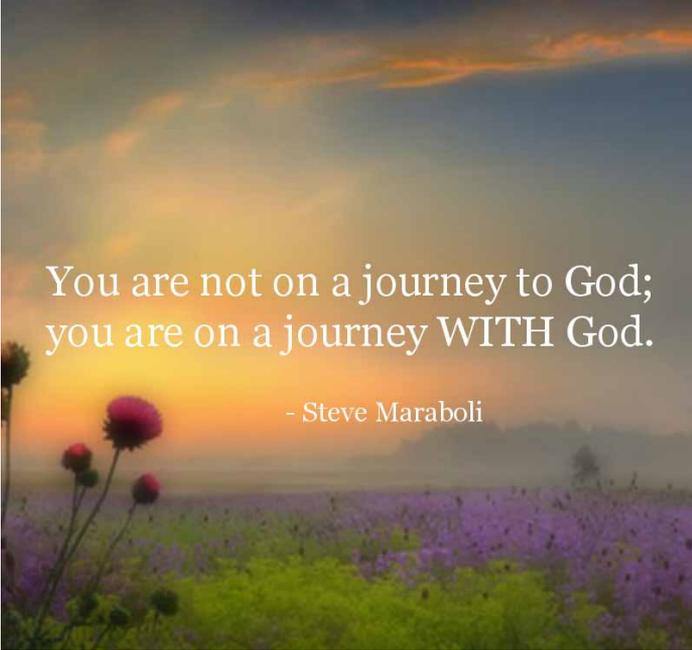
*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.*

Remember that your devotional life doesn't end with your devotional time! God is there in every moment of your life. Be devoted to God throughout the day!

*Peace and love,  
Peter+*

# Your Journey Starts Here



You are not on a journey to God;  
you are on a journey WITH God.

- Steve Maraboli

# Ash Wednesday, February 14

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Joel 2:1-2, 12-17, Psalm 103, 2 Corinthians 5:20-b-6:10, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

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*“Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful...”*

*Joel 2:12-13a*

And so we begin Lent with simple invitations: From the prophet Joel - *“open your hearts”*. In 2 Corinthians - *“be reconciled to God”*. At the end of Matthew we are challenged - *“be authentic, without pretenses...for where your heart is there your treasure will be also.”*

*Matthew 6:21*

The first reading from Joel establishes a starting point, exposes an essence, the heart, the place we most associate with love. Nothing matters but how we love. Therefore I invite you to consider that the heart of Lent is literally a journey of the heart, a journey of transformation ever more into the art of love. It is a lifetime journey. We do not love once and for all. Love is at the heart of our earthly pilgrimage, the daily opportunity of choosing to love, being the best version of ourselves for the sake of ourselves and others, becoming more and more the person God created us to be.

So the prophet Joel calls for an open heart. The prophet suggests however that it might be more challenging than you think. *“Rend your heart”* means you might need to tear it open. Where have you closed off your heart? Where have you become complacent? A beating human heart expands and contracts. Such is the rhythm of life with the literal heartaches we face and the moments too when our hearts want to burst with joy.

So what is it going to take to let this Lenten journey make a difference for the heart of who you are?

Go forward this Lent with a heart open to expansion. God is *“gracious and merciful”* and knows how to love you forward.



*As I shared at the Annual Meeting in January, “I love being your Rector.” You are in my heart with joy. I love much about life: my family and friends, where I live, my garden, my precious dog, my hobbies, and I treasure how I begin each day in my little chapel in the garage with God and a cup of coffee and then I walk in prayer...  
Paula+*

# Thursday, February 15

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Habakkuk 3:1-10, 16-18, Psalm 37:19-42, Philippians 3:12-21, John 17:1-8

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*“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”* Philippians 3:12-16

I sometimes witness people comparing themselves with other people, lamenting that they have not achieved “as much as” someone else, or maybe they feel they are not “as spiritual as” someone else...” or “as (fill in the blank) as” someone else. I am guilty of it, too. In this reading, I feel the peace that God is asking us to find by looking only and ever to God’s purpose for us in this life.

God does not want us to compare ourselves with others, no matter where we are on our path. “Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.” “Let us be of the same mind” with everyone else who is on their own unique path with God. “Let us be of the same mind” that forgets all that has come before and does not reach endlessly forward, but rather meets God in the NOW. In the space of exactly-where-I-find-myself-this-moment.

Our recollections of things past are, by our very nature, imperfect, flawed. So trying to rehash the past only means that we have turned inward to our own human frailty and tried to make it our truth. If we leave inner rehashings to stay in the moment, we are with God. We can focus on events as they unfold—live passionately and fully in the moment that brings us ever closer to God’s will for us. Our projections into the future are pure hubris—we can never know where our path will lead. It’s honestly not our job to know, and trying to force our will on a path that He did not create will only end in disappointment. Rather, stay in the moment, listening for God’s voice thrumming in your heart to guide each next step. Each person’s path with God is personal and cannot be compared with anyone else’s path. God designed it this way - that we might each feel special. If everyone’s path were the same, would you be able to recognize that you are loved because of not in spite of your differences? This reading reminds me to keep my eyes on God, not on earthly comparisons. Only God knows my true worth, and that is enough.



*Jill Fenske-Lynch and her wife Kelly have been members of St. Francis since 2003. Jill is a yoga instructor and mom of three who relishes singing in the St. Francis choir. Raised in a non-religious family, she chose to be baptized into the Episcopal church at age 16 after playing oboe for a Christmas service and finding so much peace and meaning in a holiday fraught with stress for her family growing up. She loves raising her family in the greater family of St. Francis church.*

# Friday, February 16

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Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32, Psalm 31, Philippians 4:1-9, John 17:9-19

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In God I have always fallen in good times as well as difficult times. Is it natural for the most of us who believe in God to think that God is always with us and only us and hears all of our woes and knows when we do good. God knows each and every one of us inside and out.

Life will always have a way to get to us whether it may be a good thing or a bad thing. Regardless of what happens in life, God is always there and hears us. It is we who get angry with God when things don't go the way we want them. When we get bad news from the doctor, we are quick to say, "God what happened, what have you done to me?" Of course this is a natural thing we do as humans.

But even in those difficult times when it is hard to find the good or the lesson in what is the message, we should take from what is going on with us. I choose to believe and know that as I walk my path of life with God he is ALWAYS with me and hears me and knows that my heart is full of Love and that I only want to learn from what is going on in my life.



*Robert Lavia Garcia joined St. Francis church in 2014 with his now-husband Jeff. He is co-owner, set designer, stylist and business operations manager for Mr. J's Kitchen. His first passion is dance; Robert is trained in contemporary modern and ballet and for many years had his own dance company in Long Beach, CA. Now Robert has found his second passion: cooking. He loves hiking and just being outdoors.*

# Saturday, February 17

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Ezekiel 39:21-29, Psalm 42 or 43, Philippians 4:10-20, John 17:20-26

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*I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*  
*Philippians 4:10-11*

This scripture may speak to each of us on many levels and in different ways. The part that rang so loud to my heart and my soul was, "... for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." Take time to enjoy the circumstances you face because we learn from them, grow as a person from them, and sometimes still life happens. We each have our gifts and talents we have received from God. I know we sometimes get lost in wondering and reflecting on what we don't have and think about what we want. Instead, I challenge each of us to see that we each can contribute to our family, our community, and our world by using those gifts and talents we have received from God in the circumstances we face daily.

Recently we went on a quick trip to San Francisco. Well, when we got there our room wasn't ready, it was colder than we thought it was going to be, and it was more crowded than I remembered. We still had a good time in a great city! We added more layers of clothes, ventured out, did some sightseeing and enjoyed ourselves. This is definitely an easier example of "circumstances," but I'm sure you see that the detours didn't stop our fun. The more difficult "circumstances" require deep breaths and time. We can learn "to be content whatever the circumstances" and know that God is always with us. Let's be less hard on ourselves and be at peace with our circumstances.



*Alyce Metzroth is one of our newer members of St. Francis. She, her husband, Michael and their son, Ryan, joined St. Francis in July 2016. She was born and raised in Texas. She has lived in several places in the United States including Florida, California, Maryland, and Virginia. She plans to travel to Spain one day!*

# Sunday, February 18

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Genesis 9:8-17 , Psalm 25, 1 Peter 3:18-22 , Mark 1:9-15

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*“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*  
*Mark 1:15*

The texts for this day really spoke to me. I sincerely aim, as best I am able, to know and do God’s good will for me and play my own infinitesimal part in his will for the world, but my faith is weak and I get scared. I’m now in this situation for the umpteenth time. I just read a best-selling book about the evidence for extinction-level events happening in the past where conditions on the earth were dramatically changed and tons of species just disappeared. I despaired because our climate change problem is global and, even if we could correctly figure out what to do, it would take the countries of the world working together to fix it. Good luck at doing all that!

As I was driving home and thinking about these things today, January 9th, we had a thundershower. The shower started to clear. All of a sudden, there was this glorious rainbow that seem to touch down nearby.

After I got home I saw my scripture readings for this reflection, and I read the Genesis 9 text. It got even better after I read the Psalm 25 selection. Then I read the 1 Peter selection. Finally, I read the gospel text, Mark 1:15. In that text, ‘repent’ really means metanoia, from the Greek, to take a new direction.

I believe all things on this earth are subject to God’s power and might and, in moments of hopeless despair, must look to Him for the path not seen, the metanoia, and make it our own.

This is not the first time I have felt such despair. I once was a cold warrior. Then, I could not see how we would ever avoid a nuclear holocaust. I was joyfully shocked when God solved the problem. He touched the hearts of the people of the Soviet Union and they overthrew their oppressive regime. All we had to do was to recognize and support the new situation, the new direction God had made possible - the surprise no one saw coming.

O Lord, I believe, help thou my disbelief!



*Suzanne Miller has been worshipping at St. Francis for about a year and a half and is very active in the choir. She is a retired naval officer, government official, and aerospace executive, is a scientist and engineer and is also seminary trained. She has failed retirement many times and attributes her failures in this regard to being over-educated, having a relentlessly high level of personal energy and an excessively outgoing and self-confident personality. She’s always trying to be Little Miss Fix-it. All that saves her from doom is her love and trust in the goodness of the Lord and His people.*

# Monday, February 19

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Genesis 37:1-11, Psalm 44, 1 Corinthians 1:1-19, Mark 1:1-13

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*“Awake Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself? Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?”*

*Psalm 44:23-24*

Miserable. Rejected. Oppressed. And....add to those words “frightened,” “sad,” “confused” and how about “angry?!”

A few years ago, my husband and I heard some of the most horrific words a parent can hear. One of our children had been the victim of a crime that had taken place at the hand of a so-called friend over a period of years.

Our lives very nearly spun completely out of control. I was angry and felt let down by my God. In my darkest hours I imagined ruining the life of the perpetrator by my own hand. Even though God tells us in Romans 12:19, *“Do not take revenge....but leave room for God’s wrath.... ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”* I could not eat or sleep because of my obsession with making things right. But how does a parent “fix” the brokenness? Life was ugly.

When the psalmist asked “Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?” I knew all too well how he felt. The psalmist also said *“All this came upon us though we had not forgotten you; we had not been false to your covenant.”* I, too, questioned God. After all, had we not been attending worship regularly and hosting prayer groups and Bible studies in our home? AND, in my 20’s and 30’s I had served in ministry full time. None of that mattered.

Christian apologist Lee Strobel once spoke at a church in Colorado shortly after the insane mass shooting in a theater in Aurora, Colorado. Many folks were asking him WHY DID GOD ALLOW THIS? Lee shared that God is not the creator of evil and suffering but gave us free will to decide whether to love or not to love. Unfortunately humans abuse free will by rejecting and walking away from God.

Lee also encouraged us to take a long-term perspective on suffering. We can decide whether to turn bitter or turn to God for peace and courage.

Lee also shared, “So when tragedy strikes, as it will; when suffering comes, as it will; when you’re wrestling with pain, as you will – and when you make the choice to run into His arms, here’s what you’re going to discover: you’ll find peace to deal with the present, you’ll find courage to deal with your future, and you’ll find the incredible promise of eternal life in heaven.”

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# Monday, February 19 (Contd.)

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Genesis 37:1-11, Psalm 44, 1 Corinthians 1:1-19, Mark 1:1-13

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My friends, KNOW that God hears your prayers and that he CARES for you when you are both happy and sad. God is able to use suffering to accomplish good and He will never forsake you!

May God guide, guard and direct your steps today!



*Donna Paine gave her life to Jesus and was baptized at the age of 16. She served in full time ministry for 12 years and later owned a health information business which she and her husband sold two years ago. Besides worshipping at St. Francis for the past two years, she and her husband are active supporters of the Los Angeles Dream Center and enjoy entertaining in their home. Being a parent to three children has been hugely rewarding and taking care of her elderly mother in her home is her full-time job. Donna looks forward to future travels abroad with Richard as they are not “retired” but “rewired!!”*

# Tuesday, February 20

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Genesis 37:12-24, Psalm 47-48, 1 Corinthians 1:20-31, Mark 1:14-28

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*Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

*1 Corinthians 1:20*

God truly does make the wisdom of our world seem foolish. This I know to be true.

In my experience, the wisdom of the world tells us to put our needs and desires before those of all others. It tells us that a life well lived is one that leads to riches, security, prestige and influence. In God's eyes, it tells us to focus on all of the wrong things. And far too often I find myself caught up and lost in it.

Almost always, the wisdom of the world induces stress and anxiety within me. Have I paid the mortgage, credit card bills and the utilities? A bad credit rating is to be avoided at all costs. Did I sign the kids up for enough enrichment classes? They may fall behind their classmates and be at a disadvantage. Do Jen and I have enough money saved for their college? The refrigerator needs to be restocked. I need to squeeze in a Costco run this week to replenish our resources. Are my students going to be ready for the AP exam in May? Their scores cannot be low because that would put a dent in my reputation as a teacher. There is so much to keep up with and do when following the wisdom of the world. It can be exhausting and true happiness will never be found within it.

We are told in this passage that God makes this wisdom of our world foolish. So, what then, is God's wisdom? I believe that God's wisdom is the simplest and purest of all wisdoms. It tells us to love one another unconditionally and without judgement and to put the needs of others before our own. It is a wisdom that turns the world's wisdom over on its head. And, in my experience, it is the only wisdom that has ever led me to true happiness and contentment.



*Mike Spalding and his family have been attending St. Francis Church since 2011. Mike grew up in Palos Verdes and went to Loyola High School and LMU. He credits this Jesuit education for his interest in social justice and serving the poor and disadvantaged. Mike has been teaching AP Physics since 1996 and just recently became an AVID teacher as well. He teaches at Palos Verdes Peninsula High School. He and his wife, Jen, have three wonderful kids—Maggie, Tommy & Lily. You may know these kids as the ones who eat all the cookies at coffee hour.*

# Wednesday, February 21

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Genesis 37: 25-36, Psalm 49, 1 Corinthians 2:1-13, Mark 1:29-45

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## *Reflection inspired by Psalm 49*

I was drawn to Psalm 49 when I saw its header: “For the director of music.” I am a member of the St. Francis choir and music, to me, seems to be the truest, most human and primal way to express oneself. Certainly, I think it to be the utmost expression of praise. Yet, I wasn’t sure where the connection to music was when I read it the first time. I do like the very embracing and egalitarian way we are addressed, “Listen, all who live in the world ... my mouth will speak words of wisdom and the meditation of my heart will give you understanding.”

Despite the warm beginning, the tone changes. Instead, the Psalmist makes some pretty blunt life advice here, saying, “People who have wealth but lack understanding are like beasts that perish.” Furthermore, “Do not be overawed when others grow rich ... for they take nothing with them when they die.”

I like the complete opposition to a traditional sense of monetary wealth as success. In so many ways, our modern and capitalistic society tells us success can only be determined in one way. The reminder that certainly God does not feel that the accumulation of money is the purpose or sign of a well-lived life is a message gratefully received. It reminds me of legacy, of God’s enduring legacy. That our legacies should be more than money. It is a good reminder to re-frame your principles. Gosh, is it hard, though, to not become overwhelmed and consumed by worry, envy, and want for more money.

My grandmother had a refrigerator magnet that read “Dear God, Please give me the chance to prove winning the lottery wouldn’t spoil me.” Perhaps if I have wealth but retain understanding, I will not end up a beast that perishes. How does someone retain understanding? We all do our best, but I offer up a prayer. Something like: Dear Lord, create in me discernment and wisdom. Thank you for sustaining me. Create in me a heart that does not see wealth above all else. Instead, help me seek wisdom and understanding, so that I may be a channel for your peace. Amen.



*Joy Bacon, a graduate student pursuing a teaching credential, is a member of the choir and has been attending regularly since the summer of 2016. She has many happy memories of attending St. Francis with her late grandparents, John W. Bacon Jr. and Elizabeth “Mary” Bacon as a child.*

# Thursday, February 22

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Genesis 39:1-23, Psalm 50, 1 Corinthians 2:14 - 3:15, Mark 2:1-12

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*“Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way, I will show the salvation of God.”* *Psalm 50*

To me this Psalm is a wonderful reminder to practice more gratitude in my life. I begin every prayer with a thanksgiving for all the many blessings God has given me in my life, and I know I can always expand my thanksgivings even more.

My husband, Digger, and I just started using this app called “Lasting,” a marriage health program that helps us to continually check in with one another on various important parts of our relationship. One of the researchers the app uses for its material is Dr. John Gottman, whose focus has been on marriage and parenting for over 40 years. He talks about the keys to a healthy marriage, and one of the biggest ones he found is practicing gratitude in a relationship. Gratitude shifts our focus away from ourselves back to those around us.

Not only is gratitude a source of positivity in our relationships, but the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley also reports that, “over the past two decades, studies have consistently found that people who practice gratitude report fewer symptoms of illness, including depression, more optimism and happiness, stronger relationships, more generous behavior, and many other benefits.”

While bringing our thanksgivings directly to God through prayer is always important, we can also let God shine through us in our acts of gratitude towards one another — our loved ones, our neighbors, strangers we meet.

*Who are you thankful for in your life? I invite you to reach out to those people this week and share with them why you are so grateful for them.*



*Regularly attending St. Francis from 2003-2010, Katie Lauter (formerly Gatlin) now lives in Oakland where she and her husband attend St. Paul's Episcopal. She enjoys hiking with their puppy, playing the ukulele, and cooking. Her love of the French phrase “joie de vivre” has helped her practice gratitude.*

# Friday, February 23

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Genesis 40:1-23, Psalm 51, 1 Corinthians 3:16-23, Mark 2:13-22

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*Do you not know that you[a] are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*  
*1 Corinthians 3:16:23*

If you believe in that sort of thing, and we do, this passage was chosen for me. I have a life-long love affair with my intellect. Being bright, quick, witty, and even, occasionally, thoughtful, has been my life's work. My brain got me through childhood, through the Army, through college, and college, and college. I've never been a great athlete, a potential hair model, or a singer (all things, for the record, that I would love to have been) but I can think—or so I think.

Age has a way of helping us to see the limitations of our strengths, their ephemeral nature. Athletes get slow, hair models get old, singers lose their voices, and thinkers who come to know God acquire heavenly wisdom—and we all know how that worked out for Solomon. The older I get, in other words, the less I know. This is paradoxical, liberating, challenging, and soul-shaping. So much of my life now is comprised of unlearning my ways, questioning my certainties, becoming “a fool.”

So we're clear here, I don't plan on hitting myself in the head with a blunt object anytime soon in order to become “less wise.” Rather, in this passage Paul calls us to acknowledge the futility of our cleverness, the shallowness of our thought pool (no diving). For me, the hardest part of this is letting go of the ego that I have so long attached to my intellect, though, I confess, that with God's help, it's getting easier.



*Tim Coleman is an English teacher at Peninsula High School, a member of the St. Francis Vestry, a proud father of 3, and the lucky husband of Julie Coleman.*

# Saturday, February 24

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1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 33, 1 John 2:18-25, Acts 20:17-35

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*“For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearances, but the Lord looks on the heart.”*  
1 Samuel 16:7

A fraternity brother of my husband’s passed away on Sunday. Don had experienced a bad fall and hit his head which resulted in a brain hemorrhage that could not be stopped. Normally, a fall like that wouldn’t necessarily be fatal. However, Don was a recovering alcoholic; the years of drinking had taken a toll on his body. He looked much older than he was, his skin broken down, his mind not clear.

As I sat next to him in the hospital, holding his hand and saying goodbye, I remembered part of the passage I had just read in the Book of Samuel. “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearances, but the Lord looks on the heart.” I looked at Don again and I saw his heart. I saw him. I remembered his huge smile and hearty laugh, how vehemently he would yell at the referees at USC football games and how he adoringly looked at his wife, Janice. I remembered that for more than 30 years, he would greet me with a big hug that lifted me off the ground! That is the person I will remember. Not the broken body, but the warm, loving, boisterous man I was blessed to know. It was then that I knew that when it was time for Don to leave this life, the Lord would look on his heart and lead him home.



*Liz Cook has been a member of St. Francis all her life. She just finished her term as a member of the Vestry. She is the new Directress of the Altar Guild and serves in many capacities at the 10:00am service. She is married to Bob and has two grown children, Bryan and Kristen. She is a surgical nurse overseeing Quality Assessment/Performance Improvement and Infection Prevention at Kerman-Jobe Surgery Center. In her spare time, she loves to travel and garden, and she especially loves to be outdoors in God’s Creation!*

# Sunday, February 25

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Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16, Psalm 22:22-31, Romans 4:13-25, Mark 8:31-38

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*Reflection is inspired by Mark 8:31 - 38*

When Jesus asked his disciples whom do they say that He is, Peter answered “Thou art the Christ.” But Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by elders, chief priests, scribes, and be killed, then rise again. Peter was stunned, and argued with Jesus. Heretofore the disciples had believed that the Messiah was believed to be viewed as a conqueror. Peter was suggesting one needs only to blindly follow the Messiah to achieve salvation. Jesus immediately rebuked Peter, and said, “Get thee behind me, Satan!”

Jesus went on to say that Peter was “savoring” things (i.e., laws) of man, not the things of God. Therefore Peter was tempting Jesus with power, just as Satan would. Jesus was saying that to truly follow Him meant that the self must be denied. Jesus was not willing to bribe anyone by letting them take the easy way (merely following).

To us this means that it isn't enough to merely get in line; each of us must take up our own cross and be prepared to discard our own worldly possessions and die for Christ's sake before we can follow the path of Jesus. One cannot merely follow Jesus as a leader. To do so would be trading our souls in exchange for gaining “the world.”

In addition, Jesus made it clear that He must die, then be reborn. And He applied it to the disciples, too. This is not something the disciples wanted to hear. This is truly tough love. It's not something we want to hear, either. Jesus was not offering an easy way out, but a hard way. But Jesus said that one willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for His sake shall save his soul.

Am I willing to make that sacrifice?



*Joseph Young and Gayle Taylor love animals, outer space, live theatre, hiking and travel (especially to unusual destinations). Joe, age 72, is a retired Civil Engineer and occasionally attends St. Francis services and events with Gayle. Together they have participated in programs distributing food and clothing to the homeless and other needy people for years. They are also involved in programs providing field trips for students so they can experience the great outdoors.*

# Monday February 26

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Genesis 41: 46-57, Psalm 64 or 65, 1 Corinthians 4: 8-20, Mark 3: 7-19a

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*“I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me...”*  
*1 Corinthians 4:14-16*

In 1979, my wife, children and I returned from my 3-year aerospace company assignment 5000 miles away at the Kwajalein Missile Range in the Pacific Marshall Islands to my Palos Verdes home and St. Francis Church. I had been my company's Site Manager and had been elected Senior Warden of the Kwajalein Mission by island Episcopalians. On return to PV, I enrolled our children in our Sunday school; however, I felt the need to be more involved as a Christian shepherd in their spiritual education due to an internal voice from the Holy Spirit. I accepted the role to teach the 4th grade and the charge of learning who the Anglican (British) Saints were and why they are revered by us. But my overseas experience, the scripture above, and my internal voice suggested the children get more out of their education: to learn and be tested on the basic Ten Commandments from Moses as documented in Exodus of our Christian Holy Bible and believed by all the Saints and us.

The Ten Commandments are found in the Holy Bible. Small changes \* were made by me for ease of understanding and memorization by children.

1. “(I) am the Lord your God... “you shall have no other gods before me.
2. “You shall not make for yourself a (G)raven image, ...
3. “You shall not take the (Na)me of the Lord your God in vain; ...
4. “Remember the (S)abbath day, to keep it holy.
5. “(H)onor your father and your mother, ...
6. “You shall not kill (M)urder.\*
7. “You shall not commit (A)dultery
8. “You shall not (S)teal.
9. “You shall not bear false witness (L)ie... \*
10. “You shall not (C)ovet...

These represent a large number of words for a child or adult to remember. However, if the key letters in parentheses are extracted to form a pronounceable memory phrase, the task becomes easier.

*Contd. on next page...*

# Monday February 26 (Contd.)

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Genesis 41: 46-57, Psalm 64 or 65, 1 Corinthians 4: 8-20, Mark 3: 7-19a

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Thus:

IGNaSH MASL C           pronounced “eeg nash masl c”.

This phrase was incorporated/composed into a little ditty song for the Sunday school children:

IGNASH MASL C,       10 commandments writ for me

IGNaSH MASL C,       starts with I and ends with C

IGNaSH MASL C.

The children were taught this ditty song over a couple of Sunday mornings, tested successfully for Commandment understanding and commandment order.

But did they really remember it? I returned to the St. Francis Choir after teaching for two years. Thirty years later at an assembly of Los Angeles Episcopal choirs at St. Cross in Hermosa Beach, I sang with Pancho, a former Sunday school student of mine who had learned the Ten Commandments and was now a middle-aged choir member of St. Cross. He recited the ditty and the Commandments in order. And you can, too. Remember “IGNaSH MASL C.”



*Robert Africano is a life-long (cradle) Episcopalian. He was raised in New Jersey, sang for 10 years in an Episcopal boy choir, entered Princeton University and its choir, moved to California with his parents/siblings in 1957, joining St. Francis Church and the choir. He completed his college engineering education at USC while hired part time by the Rev. Robert A. Tourigney as Youth Director in 1959. He married Jane Randall in 1963 and has sung in the choir ever since while living in Palos Verdes.*

# Tuesday, February 27

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Genesis 42:1-17, 68:1-20, 24-36, 1 Cor 5:1-8, Mark 3:19b-35

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*Father of orphans and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.*

*God gives the desolate a home to live in;  
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,  
but the rebellious live in a parched land.*

*Psalms 68:5-6*

*Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.*

*Mark 3:35*

Wow, we're already two weeks into Lent. That went fast. Or... Good Lord, we're only two weeks into Lent? This is dragging on already. Anyhow, how am I doing? Have I still given up that earthly treat I promised I would forego until Easter? Am I still keeping to my plan to pray more each day? To read the Bible more? To keep up with the readings in this devotional? Am I being a good Christian, a better disciple, these forty days and forty nights? I wonder how everyone else is doing? Am I doing better? Or worse?

Lent, with its focus on self-sacrifice, self-deprivation, and self-improvement can actually be a huge distraction. With everything going on — or perhaps not going on! — I find it easy to get wrapped up in myself: my discipleship, my piety, my holiness.

So today I remind myself that it's not about me. It's about God and what God wants of me. It's about living the life that Jesus calls me to live. And that life is one of service to others, service to our brothers and sisters, whoever they may be, and service to the world's orphans and widows, the desolate... those, in general, who are less fortunate than me.

So today I'll ask myself some different questions. How can I help? How can I serve? How should I live? How can I do something, however small, to lessen some suffering or help right some wrong?

Lord, I pray, help me to see that Lent is a means to an end and not an end in itself, and give me the strength, wisdom, and courage to serve you, and through you, to serve our all our brothers and sisters, that thy will be done here today, through this season, and beyond. Amen.



*Peter Marshall is a life-long Anglican, a latter-day Episcopalian, and a 15-year or so member of St. Francis where he fixes computers, fiddles around with the sound system, and occasionally has the privilege of preaching.*

# Wednesday, February 28

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Genesis 42:18-28, Psalm 119:73-96, 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8, Mark 4:1-20

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*Devotional inspired by Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.*

Before my high school journey began, I expected it to be exactly the same as middle school except that I, like many others, would be the youngest in the school. However, this image of mine dissipated very fast. In middle school, kids were less aware of social status. In high school, I began to notice how many of my closest friends wanted to become “popular.” And very soon, many of them were caught up in the world of vapes, alcohol, and drugs. What I began to notice was that they didn’t do it just to enjoy it, but they did it so that they wouldn’t be considered a “loser.”

It also came to me that the kids who did these things were all connected to the notorious “dealers” at the school somehow. Once they are in that circle, it’s hard to resist the pressure and temptation to keep doing more vapes, alcohol, or drugs. So by seeing many of my friends go down a help-less road, I decided that it would be best to stay away from these circles, like Paul teaches. I know I could be more popular if I joined in, but at the end of the day, it’s not worth it.

Even though I’m not in these tight circles, I’m still friends with many of these kids. I try to convince them to stop in a friendly way. Rather than reject them outright, I try to think of how Jesus didn’t reject or condemn people for their sins. Rather, he encouraged them to do the right thing and loved them regardless.



*Joe Miyashita is a sophomore at Palos Verdes High School. He loves playing the guitar and he enjoys the time he spends at school, even though it can be tough. Baseball and basketball are both things he appreciates.*

# Thursday, March 1

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Genesis 42:29-38, Psalm 74, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Mark 4:21-34

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*“It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”* Mark 4:31-32

The scripture from Mark, above, is what stood out to me from the readings assigned for today. I am constantly reminded how things that we do, that may seem very, very small at the time, might grow to become much bigger things. It can be a kind word to someone we see (whether we know them or not), a visit to someone, preparing a meal for someone, or bringing groceries to someone, just to give a few examples. There are thousands of different things that can “be planted.”

This past Saturday I had the opportunity to help with a reception after the memorial service for Pam Fitting. I did not know Pam but St. Teresa’s Guild, of which Pam was a member, hosted the reception. So many people did things and participated in ways that seem small when you think about them individually (bringing a dessert or a bottle of wine, making centerpieces, washing tablecloths afterwards) but when all these small things are “planted” it provided a lovely setting for family and friends of Pam to remember her.

Obviously this is an example which happened at church but I think we all are called to take this same opportunity out into the world with us, into our neighborhoods, workplaces, communities. Every little thing that we do has the potential to become so much bigger.



*Joyce Alley began coming to St. Francis again in August of 2016. She grew up, was confirmed and married at St. Francis. After 32 years of living in the Midwest, she and her husband Chris moved back to Southern California and are glad to be back!*

# Friday, March 2

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Genesis 43:1-15, Psalm 73, 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, Mark 4:35-41

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*“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!”  
Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.”* Mark 4:39

Peace! Be still! This command alone has served me well over the last several years as I was navigating many a stormy sea...the loss of my husband, the loss of my father, and then the loss of my mother, all the while raising a very bright and sensitive son coming of age in an exciting but complicated world. Countless times when I felt I was in the eye of a hurricane of emotions — fear, grief, anger, hostility, hate, sadness — I would pray the words, “Peace! Be still!” to calm myself and remind myself that Jesus was there with me, and to not lose faith as somehow everything was going to be ok.

I particularly love the image of Jesus peacefully taking a nap while the boat he and his disciples are on is getting swamped and tossed about in a storm, and how he must wake up to calm the disciples’ fears. He questions why they are afraid and why they have lost faith. Peace! Be still!

Voltaire once quipped, “Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats,” and it is a favorite quote of mine mostly because it makes me laugh at a very sardonic view of life. Although I do not see life as a shipwreck by any means, I do take to heart that we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats when the sea gets stormy, to not lose faith, and to always remember Christ is with us to calm our fears. Peace! Be still!



*Terri Tsuchida has been a member of St Francis since 2012 and gives much credit to this loving, wonderful parish for helping her navigate the stormy seas of her life. She has served on the Vestry, is a member of St. Anne’s Guild and St. Teresa’s Guild, and she loves to help with Designs for Dining, the Antique Show, and the Rummage Sale. She is a full-time real estate agent serving the South Bay. She loves to cook and entertain, but her greatest joy*

# Saturday, March 3

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Genesis 43:16-34, Psalm 27, 1 Corinthians 7:10-24, Mark 5:1-20

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*“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” Psalm 27:14*

Wait on the Lord — The Psalmist David is telling us that we must wait on God. In fact, he tells us twice! The Psalm is telling us to trust in the Lord, to rely on Him, and come to Him when we are faced with fear and difficulties. To wait on his intercession when everything that we do in an earthly manner fails. David tells us not to be dismayed, but to hope and trust in the Lord. When we pray, and in that prayer, believe, trust and have faith, we will receive an answer from our Lord. But remember, the last portion of the scripture says again: “Be strong and wait for the Lord.”

Sounds pretty simple? Wait! Let’s be honest ... waiting is hard! How many times have we prayed and nothing happens. Or at least it seems that nothing happens. Are you sure nothing happens? Let’s take a look at that. Waiting is the Lord’s way of getting your attention! He wants us to ask in prayer, and in discussion with Him! It’s designed to bring us closer to our Lord. We must ask ourselves if we are praying in obedience with God and are we in acceptance of His will. If not, chances are you’ll probably be waiting a bit longer ...

God wants to help us and He will, but here’s the hard part: It’s all in God’s timing and we must accept that. Remember (and there’s even a song about this) sometimes unanswered prayer is what God’s answer is. He knows what is best for us even when we can’t see it ourselves. He wants us to pray continuously! I have someone that I’ve been praying for every day for the past 6 years. I’m still waiting for my prayer to be answered, but in that 6 years I’ve become closer to God in many ways ... I know He hears and I won’t stop!!



*Richard Paine has been attending St Francis with his wonderful wife Donna for the past two years. They sold their business a couple of years ago, but instead of retiring he likes to say “We are ‘rewired,’ not retired!” He is a professional musician and a Voiceover Artist.*

# Sunday, March 4

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Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 2:13-22

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*Reflection is inspired by Exodus 20:1-17*

What is one to think of timeless wisdom? The kind of wisdom that is forever relevant, transcends all ages, civilizations, customs, trends, and fads? The kind of wisdom that continues to prove fundamentally true and just makes sense in the long run, no matter what the situation? Something like that can only have been fashioned out of divine inspiration.

Such is the case with the words in Exodus 20, verses 1 through 17, which record one of the most remarkable events in the history of Israel and indeed the world. The event in which God speaks directly to His people and defines His immutable standards of living for the whole human race, cast into what we affectionately refer to as the Ten Commandments.

God's choice to enter the world in this way and the nature of His guidance reveal a deep desire to establish a relationship with us and to help us understand what are proper and moral — in fact beneficial to us as individuals — behaviors in the world He has created. God is asking for a relationship based on respect for Him (you shall have no other Gods), for others (you shall not...), and for ourselves (remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy). His guidance about the Sabbath shows that he knows us better than we know ourselves. His timeless wisdom did not need to wait for the advent of the digital age, cell phones, and the not-so-social social media, to know that humans need time to rest, unplug, and make time for God, family, friends and even strangers, in a personal way in order to reconnect with our true nature.

May you continue to strengthen your relationship with God, a God that is eternally relevant, wants to be in relationship with you, and wants the best for your life.



*Fabrizio Pelá has been a parishioner at St. Francis for 18 years. He and his family enjoy participating in various aspects of parish life, connecting with the wonderful people of this blessed church community, and receiving spiritual nourishment that helps to keep life's challenges in perspective.*

# Monday, March 5

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Genesis 44:18-34, Psalm 77, 1 Corinthians 7:25-31, Mark 5: 21-43

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During Lent, I take on an action and open myself through meditation, prayer, and awareness to new possibilities.

In the Gospel, this woman is considered worthless — not even dignified with a name! She should not have been in public alone because she is a woman, because hemorrhages make her “unclean” and unfit to be in relationship with anyone. She should never approach Jesus! “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” We imagine her despair, seeking the impossible made possible. As she touched Jesus’ clothes, she was healed. Jesus, mindful of the “power that had left him,” searches for her. Jesus is unconcerned by her “uncleanness,” showing the way of compassion to comfort her suffering. Jesus shows us that all are worthy of love, dismissing no one. Jesus makes the impossible possible. Jesus demonstrates mindfulness that we are all children of God. Through mindfulness, He did not miss the opportunity to heal and give dignity and love to each person he met. There is no judgement or dismissiveness because of her gender, illness, or status.

How many life opportunities have we missed because of mindlessness? We gather ourselves in the cloak of routine, living according to our previous experience and teachings of our past — accepting what was as what is, not seeing what could be. “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.” Imagine our world if we took our awareness and faith to a mindful and deeper level, opening our hearts to a new way of living, reframing our experience to create new opportunities for love and life!

This Lenten Season, I pray for deeper mindfulness to be aware of my own mindsets, and a heart open to truly see the impossible as possible in the presence of Jesus Christ!



*Celeste Stump is a Deacon, Chaplain, Daughter of God, and Traveler on Earth, attempting to become the authentic, loving person Jesus Christ wishes her to be.*

# Tuesday, March 6

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Genesis 45:1-15, Psalm 78:40-72, 1 Corinthians 7:32-40, Mark 6:1-13

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*“Then the Lord awoke as from sleep...” (Ps. 78:65)*

As I read the Psalm for this week, I feel I am reading a small bit of scripture that represents the whole, the entire story of the relationship of Creation and Creator in a nutshell: God provides, humans forget, God chastises, humans repent, God forgives. Reading through the Bible, a mystery unfolds. Not why did God create, not why do bad things happen to good people, but why does God suffer long with God’s rebellious people?

This cycle begins in Eden and continues throughout history. The outline of events becomes so consistently repetitive as to become tragically comic. God forgave them ... again ... and again ... and again.

In the beginning, *“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31)* This declaration includes the humans, not just the Earth with the plants and animals. Despite everything that came later, there remained something in humanity that God sees that is good.

I think I am unable to comprehend this mystery. Burdened as I am with my lifetime experiences of betrayals, resentments, failures, and even hatreds, the concept that God is love (*I Jn. 4:8*) — and not just that God loves — may always remain a mystery.

I rest in the thought that despite our mistakes, God continues to seek relationship with God’s Creation, including you and me. The fundamental goodness God saw in the beginning is still here, and a fundamental goodness in God refuses to allow God to walk away forever.

God awakes. God remembers.



*Wayne Hastings is a self-employed graphic designer living in Torrance with his husband, Brooks Belhumeur, and their three Pomeranians. He graduated from the Education for Ministry (EfM) program in 2014 and served as an EfM mentor for 1 year at All Saints Pasadena and 3 years at St. Francis Palos Verdes. Wayne is imperfect, but he means well.*

# Wednesday, March 7

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Genesis 45:16-28, Psalm 81, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 6:13-29

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<sup>8</sup>*Hear, O my people, while I admonish you; O Israel, if you would but listen to me!*

<sup>9</sup>*There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god.*

<sup>10</sup>*I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.*

<sup>11</sup>*“But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.*

<sup>12</sup>*So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.*

<sup>13</sup>*O that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!*

<sup>14</sup>*Then I would quickly subdue their enemies, and turn my hand against their foes.*

<sup>15</sup>*Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, and their doom would last forever.*

<sup>16</sup>*I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”*

*Psalm 81:8-16*

I am struck by how much God wants to be in relationship with us. God’s grief over our stubbornness is evident; “*O that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!*” We do not, on our own, automatically choose the way of God’s light and love over the ways of the world. We need to be reminded; we need to support and encourage each other. And that is what we do when we gather together to worship God. We take a small piece of our time and turn it to God, indicating that we acknowledge God to be sovereign in our lives. We praise God, listen for God’s word, and are strengthened in our intention to be God’s people by our fellow travelers. We need to come together in order to build up the body of Christ (us). We need each other.

O God, help us to keep our love for you primary in our lives, above all else. Remind us how to worship you and love each other, so we can serve your world. Amen.



*Jeannie Cobb serves as Director of Music, Youth, and Arts at St Francis. She has been with us since December of 2012. Jeannie has led music in churches for most of her adult life and has her Doctorate in Worship Studies. Jeannie and Clayton have just welcomed their fourth grandchild into the world and are loving this next chapter in their lives!*

# Thursday, March 8

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Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34, Psalm 85 or 86, 1 Corinthians 9:1-15, Mark 6:30-46

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*Devotional inspired by 1 Corinthians 9:1-15*

Today's Corinthians scripture is titled "Paul's Rights as an Apostle." In it, he reflects on a life of service and preaching the gospel of Jesus, versus simply making a living and reaping the harvest that you sowed. To me, he was doing an act of love in the spirit of love.

As you may know, my husband Robert and I were going to open a restaurant, which we had to walk away from right before we opened. We put that experience behind us and decided that will not be the narrative that defines who we are either personally or professionally.

These particular verses in Corinthians struck a chord with me, and I bring up the restaurant story to exemplify this. When everything fell apart, I was left with many questions. It was too easy to be angry. Didn't I have the right to benefit from all the work we had put into the restaurant? And then, I gave it all to God. And something changed when I opened my heart to what God was trying to put inside of it.

So what changed? Well, we didn't have a full catering schedule because we thought we'd be busy with the restaurant. So when work came in, we were more grateful than we'd ever been, and it felt good just to be of service, especially since we had wondered if all was lost.

At one point in this upswing, I remembered one of Mother Paula's sermons. She talked about her parents' candy business and how each candy her mom made was a prayer. With this shift in perspective of our business, I now viewed it as an opportunity to serve and pray over every appetizer, meal and dessert we prepared. It was an opportunity to pray that God's love flows through me into the food I was cooking. It was a chance to pray for blessings on whatever celebration was happening. My job and business now filled my heart in a way I could never expect. But none of this would've happened without the restaurant experience.

So I ask you, what is it that you do in your profession or daily life that you can turn into a prayer of love? Can you imagine what the world would be like if we all used what we do on a daily basis as a prayer? I think it would be a beautiful world.



*Jeff Lavia joined St. Francis church back in 2014 with his now-husband Robert. He is the Executive Chef of their catering company, MR. J's Kitchen. When not happily working away in the kitchen, he enjoys hiking around, taking pictures of anything and everything, hanging out at home with Robert and their cat Penelope, taking road trips and having dinner and wine with family and friends.*

# Friday, March 9

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Genesis 47:1-26, Psalm 91 or 92, 1 Corinthians 9:16-27, Mark 6:47-56

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*“Do you not know that in a race runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it.”* 1 Corinthians 9:24

A metaphor I think about literally and figuratively as I run through life and this Lenten course... My first thoughts are about our son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren who are all serious runners. I text my grandchildren before every race to remind them God is with them every foot of the challenge and that Dick and I send them our prayers and love. Of course, just as they aspire, we hope for personal records, victories, and points for their teams.

After an important final state meet, my oldest granddaughter did not race as well as she had hoped. She was disappointed, yet when her coach asked her, “How do you think you did?” her first reply was, “I kept faith in God the whole time.” While all of us assessed her performance as not as strong as in previous meets and wondered why she hadn’t done better, we missed the point! My granddaughter was in the “state” in which we should’ve been: Thinking about the whole picture of life that God has given us, full of many snapshots inside and outside of the winners’ podium. We are all in that race and we all yearn for something, earn something, and learn something from each experience.

I believe that is what God wants us to achieve, and often I have failed at that. So in my future good luck texts to my grandchildren, I will include: “Run with God always and you will be the winner!” But what about those who don’t feel like winners? How can I be a better team member to them this Lent? I would like to commit to sending a note each of the 40 days to connect with a family member, friend, student or colleague so they know that God’s love cheers us on from the start and His love will embrace us at the finish line.

When I pray for victories for my grandkids, for UCLA football and basketball teams, when I pray in the stage wings before my performance, it’s OK as long as I commit that same passion, training, preparation, and sacrifice to becoming a better Christian and to earning a prize in God’s Games of Life. This will be my Lenten focus, to remember that GOD IS a good sport in the many ways I interpret that, give it and live its meaning for Lent and beyond.....



*Liz Cantine has been an active member of the warm and welcoming church family at St. Francis for several years, although her husband Dick, former vestry member, has been a member much longer. In fact, their son was baptized in the chapel 47 years ago! Liz was received formally into the church last year and serves as a prayer team member, oblation bearer and reader. She is passionate about dancing, teaching, choreographing and performing, and thanks God for all of this.*

# Saturday March 10

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Genesis 47:27-48:7, Psalm 87 and 90, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Mark 7:1-23

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*“Lord, through all the generations you have been our home. Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from the beginning to the end, you are God.”* *Psalm 90:1-2*

I recently watched an episode of *How the Universe Works*. Whenever I think about the expansiveness of the universe, it reminds me how our lives right now aren't even a blip of time in the scheme of things. And anything we worry about now won't even matter in five years, let alone five billion years. It's actually liberating to remember and realize how small I am in the universe and how little I am in control. God existed before the universe was even created, and will exist when the universe will eventually die in billions of years. He is the Alpha and Omega.

When I remember this, I feel like I'm able to live more freely more fully, knowing the fate of the universe isn't in my hands. It's in God's hands. Sometimes we give ourselves too much credit and put too much pressure on ourselves. Sure, we want to be the best we can be, be the best wife, daughter, friend, employee, but at the end of the day, we can let the control go. “Jesus, take the wheel!”

Someone recently said to me, “Don't spend more than five minutes worrying about something if it's not going to matter in five years.” I've started to be mindful of this phrase whenever I start getting overwhelmed or stressed. We can get through anything when at the end of the day God is our home. Remember there is a whole universe that existed before you and will exist after you. We can look to Him because he's been here before the birth of the earth and world as we know it.



*Sabrina Ayala (Gutierrez), daughter of Hector and Cheryl Gutierrez, has been a member of the St. Francis community since she was in first grade (1994). She went through Sunday school, confirmation, Rite 13 (middle school youth group) and J2A (high school “Journey to Adulthood” youth group) during the years she was most involved. She recently got married to her husband, Reuben Ayala, in the big church on August 25, 2017. Mother Paula officiated the beautiful ceremony. She considers St. Francis her home away from home and the church family, her second family.*

# Sunday, March 11

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Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22, Ephesians 2:1-10, John 3:14-21

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*“Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.”*  
*Psalm 107:21-22*

I left England in 1982 to come to the United States, looking to start my life fresh with a new beginning. I had a job opportunity in Santa Monica and was looking forward to my new life here when, unexpectedly, the job did not work out too well, and in less than 2 months, I was out of work. So here I was, new country, unemployed, knowing virtually no one. And yet, I never doubted that this was where I wanted to be. However, I was desperate for work and I missed feeling “settled.”

I found temporary work in Palos Verdes and started attending St. Peter’s By-the-Sea Presbyterian Church. I would not have survived without St. Peter’s, for during this time period, I moved 6 times in one year and was feeling anything but settled, and I began to have misgivings. But the congregants of St. Peter’s were so attentive. One of their ministers said, “If you ever feel any doubt, call me, I’m here for you.” Members of the church asked, “How are you doing? How can we pray for you?” The parish cared for me like family. I joined the choir; I served in the food pantry at Harbor Interfaith. And I felt settled.

Looking back, losing that first job in Santa Monica was the beginning of a desperate and unsettling time for me, but through faith and trust in the Lord along with the supportive love and prayers of my St. Peter’s By-the-Sea family, I was able to get through those unnerving times. God certainly uses all the stops in our journey of faith to give us what we need in that moment.



*Suzy Marshall became a member of St. Francis after accepting an invitation to attend from her friend Sandy Barsby, who raved about Mother Sarah’s dynamic sermons. Suzy recently semi-retired from her work as a professional cook, nanny and housekeeper after 50 years.*

# Monday, March 12

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Genesis 49:1-28, Psalm 89:19-52, 1, Corinthians 10:14 - 11:1, Mark 7:24-37

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*“All things are lawful,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other.*

*1 Corinthians 10:23-24*

As I read through today’s readings, I found a theme that kept returning was one of both place and duty not only to ourselves, but to our communities. We are supposed to strive daily to be true to our conscience and true to the teachings of Christ. And yet, we find ourselves in conflict with others with diverse beliefs, many of whom profess the same Faith as ours. What are we to think?

Recent social justice issues found in the daily news and discussed on social media point to a line that has often been moved from spirited yet respectful debate to outright hostile attack. We observe — and perhaps participate in — countless examples of arguing to the person, not the point.

While we should be true to our conscience, and that conscience may direct us to move toward change in our communities, we ought to reflect on what approach might best serve not only our personal feelings, but the preservation of dignity within our communities, even toward those that we consider our adversaries.

We shouldn’t lose hope for reconciliation with parties that don’t see Service in Christ our way. Gandhi spoke that, “Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress.” It’s the temperament of the debate that we all need to work on. Coming from a place of understanding the other, respecting that we are all born in His image, may be a good beginning.



*John Bukowski and his wife Shari have been members of our St. Francis parish since 2006. John has served on the Vestry and has volunteered both in youth instruction and as a lay eucharistic minister. He can often be found weekends on the soccer field, coaching his younger son Michael, or heading to the gym with his son Matthew.*

# Tuesday, March 13

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Genesis 49:29 – 50:14, Psalm 94, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Mark 8:1-10

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## *Reflection inspired by Mark 8:1-10.*

I've always loved the story of this miracle. I picture all the people on the mountainside listening to Jesus as he mesmerizes them with his message. Ever practical, I'm amazed that they can hear him. Then I recall that the ancient Greeks performed before thousands, relying only on the acoustics of the rock arenas where they performed. Did the same principle work for Jesus? I'm left wishing I could be transported back to feel what it was like to be in that crowd. Then I consider what Jesus did and why.

Above all, Jesus focused on the needs of those gathered for three days. He told his disciples he needed to feed these people, so bring him whatever food they had. Incredulous, they brought the few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. But Jesus took what they set before him, blessed and multiplied it and fed his people. Through this miracle, Jesus speaks to me.

I hear him telling me to be aware of the needs of those around me, to do what I can with whatever I have. I hear him whispering, "Look ... imagine the pain of that person." He compels me to look with empathy at people hungering for literal and spiritual food.

At St. Luke's, I interact with those hungry for food, clean clothes, hot showers. I witness people facing a life I cannot imagine. When I help a woman pick out clothes, usually she's grateful, but sometimes, she's out of sorts, grumbling. When I help a woman get a shower, usually she's cooperative. But sometimes she's frustrated at the time limit, the finicky water pressure. If I say, "I understand, but..." she says, "No you don't..." I know she's right. Still, I know God's in her pain as well as in my feeble attempts to help.

Mama Hill, devoting her life to those around her in need, is another person God holds up to me. I know I can take for granted my many blessings. But God nudges me. I get a message from Mama that someone needs diapers, backpacks or books. "Pray for them," she says.

These are some of the people God asks me to feed, to treat with kindness and respect as God's children. These are the people with whom God urges me to share my gifts. Just as he shared the bread and fishes with the hungry around him, Jesus asks me to do what I can for those around me.



*Sue Egan is a retired English teacher and counselor. She loves reading, playing pickle ball and doing most anything with her family.*

# Wednesday, March 14

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Genesis 50:15-26, Psalm 119:121-144, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Mark 8:11-26

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*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit” 1 Corinthians 12:4*

When I was a child, Christmas was all about the gifts, and how they were distributed. I wasn't sure of the source of the contents of my Christmas stocking, or of the wrapped presents that appeared magically on Christmas morning, spilling out around the tree. But I watched carefully to see what my brother and sister got, to see if their gifts were 'better' than mine. "What did you get?" was the question repeated all Christmas day by adults and siblings alike.

So I have tended to approach the Gifts of the Spirit in much the same way. Which gift did I get? Is it the 'best' of the gifts?

When you are involved in Church life the question comes up repeatedly: "What are your gifts? And how will they help us in our mission?" Answering the question usually makes me uncomfortable. Do I dare say I have the gift of Wisdom? What about Knowledge? Sometimes that's a yes, but mostly I feel inadequate in the knowledge department. I've been exercising the Faith muscle quite a bit lately, but is that a gift I share with the Community? I have been told I have worked a Miracle or two. Does that count?

What I know now is that all the Gifts of the Spirit are available to me and through me "just as the Spirit chooses." When I am able to counsel a friend in need, it is the Spirit giving me Wisdom. When my Faith shines as an example for others, that's the Spirit again. And when I manage to say something brilliant that is just what someone 'needs to hear' — and then can't remember afterwards what I said — that is the Spirit giving me the words and allowing me to be the conduit. The Source of all these Gifts is the same Spirit, and that Knowledge brings me great comfort.



*Christine Budzowski visited St. Francis in early January 2017 and knew immediately that she had found her spiritual home. Baptized in the Church of England and moving to Hollywood at the age of 10, she 'grew up' in the Episcopal Church and has been actively involved in just about every aspect of church life. She has served as webmaster for the Dioceses of Los Angeles and Hawaii, been involved with Episcopal Church Women (ECW) at the parish, diocesan, and National levels, and with Daughters of the King at the diocesan, provincial, and National levels. Mother to Marina and Katherine, she enjoys knitting, container gardening, gourmet vegetarian cooking, cats, and her three grandchildren, not necessarily in that order.*

# Wednesday, March 15

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Exodus 1:6-22, Psalm 73, 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Mark 8:27 – 9:1

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*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .”*

*1 Corinthians 12:12-13a*

Paul draws an analogy between the Church and the human body. No one person, nor one group, can become the Church. vs. 17 *“If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?”* No part is important on its own; it takes all the parts working together to make the Church function properly. vs. 21 *“The eye cannot say to the hand ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”*

He goes on to point out that no one part is more important than another: vs. 22 *“. . . the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable . . .”* We may view ourselves as having insignificant gifts, but those like serving, encouraging, organizing, showing mercy and giving, are the gifts through which the work of God’s kingdom is carried out. God gives us each gifts that are vital to the ministry, and it is up to us to discover them and use them.

We could think of the Church as an orchestra, which, with all the members working together, produces beautiful music – God’s music. As we are frequently asked to help with various projects or ministries within our congregation, we may feel inadequate in our abilities, or guilt for not doing more. Here Paul suggests that if each of us tries to find his or her own special gifts and talents, no matter how small they may appear to us, working together we will help this “body” to effectively carry out its mission.



*Laurie Anderson is a native Angeleno, and became active at St. Francis when Fr. Dean Farrar was rector. She and her husband, Keith, have two grown sons and three grandchildren: Colin, Claudia and Emily. She has served twice on the St. Francis Vestry, and feels blessed to a reader & chalice bearer at the 8:00 services.*

# Friday, March 16

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Exodus 1:6-22, Psalm 107:1-32, 1 Corinthians 12:27 – 13:3, Mark 9:2-13

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*Devotional is inspired by Psalm 107*

Gratitude for the compassion and forgiveness of our Lord is what this is about, to me. Four times, within 28 verses, we are told “*They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.*” This is followed by “*He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves are still.*” This is written in simple prose — not poetry — and it is very clear.

I believe there is nothing so meaningful, so helpful, to me as to be truly grateful for all I have been given: the good for its beauty and the joy it brings, and the not-so-good for that which it teaches me.

I believe that whatever happens to us, there’s a reason for it happening. It can bring us joy, it can bring us problems, it can bring us challenges we have to meet. I believe we should be grateful for every day and experience and learn whatever we can from it. I think it’s always important to be in the now and just thoroughly enjoy and absorb the moments God gives us.



*Julia Ward’s parents were high school teachers in Oregon when they met. Her dad had ambitions of advancing in the field of education; her mother had the ambition of becoming a mother. Both achieved their goals. Julia Ward considers herself one of the lucky ones who had parents she could both love and admire. Her family lived in the beautiful town of Ashland, Oregon through her childhood years, then moved to California. Since then she’s considered herself a native Californian even though she’s been (rather forcefully) corrected!*

*She met and instantly fell in love with her husband to be; they married in St. Francis and had 2 children, both of whom graduated from PV High. Her daughter has 3 lovely daughters and her son is an attorney in Torrance. Julia graduated from UCSB with a degree in Psychology. Years later, she became interested in drawing and painting. She particularly liked taking a few lessons from Paula out behind this church a few years ago. She now lives in Hermosa Beach and will always consider St. Francis a very important part of her life.*

# Saturday, March 17

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Exodus 2:23 – 3:15, Psalm 33, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Mark 9:14-29

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*Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, it's not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth: bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* 1 Corinthians 13:3-7

*For we know in part, and we prophecy in part: but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.* 1 Corinthians 13:9-10

*But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.* 1 Corinthians 13:13

Commonly known as the Love Chapter and quite often used in wedding ceremonies, this is one of the best loved scriptures. It is so obviously palatable; it is warm, and yes, loving. My grandfather, a Southern Baptist preacher, read this at our wedding with his liquid and gentle Richmond accent. Unforgettable to this day. He did say he did not like the KJV because "Charity" is a cheap word." I agree; this scripture needs the word "Love." It's just not the same without it.

But ... as comforting and complete as this verse is, while writing a devotional about it I felt inadequate and way under the bar. Whaat?? Hellp!! Patient, well sometimes; kind, much of the time; not jealous, well, certainly not all the time; does not brag, not usually; not arrogant, also not usually; act unbecomingly, I'm just not sure; does not seek its own and is not provoked, ouch! I do rejoice with the truth, thankfully; bears all things, certainly not, but I do believe all things and I do hope all things but I certainly do not endure all things.

Ahhh ... here it is! "When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away!" That's it!!! We are the partial. And though we strive for the perfect, we do know The Perfect. Jesus Christ given to us to be our Perfect in our very imperfect lives.

"But now abide faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love." His love. Amen!



*Suzanne Gatlin is Coordinator of Sunday School and happy participant in the life of our St. Francis parish and, yes, happily married!*

# Sunday, March 18

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Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 51:1-13, Hebrews 5:5-10, John 12:20-33

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*This devotional was inspired by Mark 8:11-26 (from March 14th) \*\**

This passage made me think of miracles. And miracles made me think of the daily miracles I find so very soul satisfying. Now by definition, a miracle is “a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency.” So maybe my daily miracles are just blessings, right? Then I thought about the weight we give to things. You know, a common cold is ‘just a cold’ to one person and ‘I’m dying’ to someone else, right? Admittedly, my own reactions to things run that full gamut.

I gave this a bit of thought and decided that I want to continue to weigh some good things as miracles, whether or not they meet the criteria. A gorgeous sunrise seen on my early morning commute to work. The incomparable blue of a post-rain sky. A whale’s blow seen because I’m blessed to live near the ocean. A kind word or chat on a day when I’m feeling particularly alone. The beauty of a song which particularly touches your heart. Even the smell of coffee, or freshly baked bread.

This also serves as a reminder that a seemingly small thing, like that kind word or cup of coffee, can be a miracle to someone in need of one. We have the power not only to receive miracles but also to be a part of them, wow!

There will still be days when I’m questioning and looking for the big flashing neon sign saying “GOD LOVES YOU,” of course there will be. But most days I’ll revel in the miracles that I’m blessed with every day.

*\*\* Two reflection writers were inadvertently assigned to the March 14th scriptures, so today’s reflection is inspired by the Gospel of Mark from that date and not today’s readings.*



*Susan Tsuji is married and has one adult (how did that happen?) daughter. She relishes serving St. Francis through her favorite hobby – singing! She has sung in our choir for several years and usually sings in two or three choirs at any given time. Over the years, she’s had the opportunity to sing in some very cool and iconic venues including Disney Hall, Carnegie Hall, First AME Church, The Music Center, and the Mozarteum in Salzburg. When she’s not working (at CSULB) or singing, she enjoys reading (especially in front of the fireplace), walks by the ocean, traveling, and puzzles (both jigsaw and crossword).*

# Monday, March 19

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Isaiah 63:7-16, Psalm 34, Matthew 1:18-25, Ephesians 3:14-41

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*I will tell you about the kind deeds the LORD has done. They deserve praise!*  
Isaiah 63:7

I'm often reduced to tears by the small kindnesses that people do for one another. A thoughtful call in the middle of the workday from a friend thousands of miles away, telling you that they were thinking of you and wanting to know how you are doing. Seeing your colleague stop and, clumsily, juggle his Subway lunch in order to find some money in his wallet to give to a homeless woman. He didn't know I was watching. In these moments of witnessing kindnesses of others I often state, "people are good." They aren't distributing these kindnesses to be noticed or praised; they feel it in their hearts to take these actions. These good people inspire me to live in kindness and to offer the love that He and these good people demonstrate. The Lord has given us the gift of caring for one another and the honor of witnessing His love.



*Some of Amanda MacLennan's happiest memories as a child include the Anglican Church, and Sunday was one of her favorite days of the week. That being said, she would describe herself as a late religious bloomer. She did grab and hold on to the big messages from her early days and would say that these messages have guided her life and character. Finding St. Francis after many years away from the Church has given her the opportunity to remind herself of the big messages as well as be vulnerable as she ventures into the inspiring and, sometimes, scary details found in the Bible.*

# Tuesday, March 20

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Exodus 5:1-6, Psalm 124, 1 Corinthians 14:20-33a, 39-40, Mark 9:42-50

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*“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.”*  
Mark 9:42-43

Who doesn't love comfort food? My choices include Suzanne's special pasta of the week, homemade chicken pot pie, and apple pie, right out of the oven, à la mode. And speaking of comfort, who doesn't have those "comfort Bible verses" that you always find yourself quoting and falling back on? Mine include *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul”* and *“Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

While we each find comfort in different things and may differ on which Bible verses provide comfort, I guarantee that none of you have any of the passages assigned for today's readings, on your list of comfort verses. If anything, these verses make us uncomfortable. We instinctively do not want to deal with them because these verses appear tough and harsh. However, as the old saying goes, *“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”* So now that Jesus has our attention with his amputation metaphors and use of references to fire and hell, what is Jesus instructing us to do?

For me, it's all about discipleship, about Jesus wanting us to be his disciples and to take ownership of our responsibility to live our faith in a way that leads and guides others on their personal walk with Christ. Jesus makes his point by warning us of the dangers of causing other people, other Christians, or as Mark says "little ones" to stumble or lose their faith.

Each day Jesus calls us to take our faith to heart, to commit to having our faith in Christ at the core of our being, to know that difficulties, obstacles, and challenges are opportunities for us to rely upon Christ and to surrender to his everlasting love, especially as we interact with our family members, friends, and all we encounter. By following Christ and living our lives through Christ we will serve as a light in the world, and in so doing, often unknowingly, provide inspiration, hope, and "comfort" to those we meet.

Blessings on your Lent and Godspeed!



*Hank Gatlin and his wife Suzanne have been members of St. Francis since 2003 and continually are blessed through this parish and its people. Hank has enjoyed serving St. Francis and the Diocese of Los Angeles in a variety of ways.*

# Wednesday, March 21

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Exodus 7:8-24, Psalm 128, 129, 130, 2 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:6, Mark 10:1-16

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The end of the gospel reading for today tells of the disciples turning the little children away and of Jesus' response, "*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*"

Such familiar words open new meanings each time I read them. Perhaps that's because little children exhibit such a bundle of different qualities. The image of children wanting to interact with someone is such a familiar one, easy to picture in my mind.

My first image is a bunch of innocent, loving children flocking to the gentle, welcoming savior. This image reminds me of my intention to be open, teachable and not cynical. I need to be receptive to the teachings of our Lord to be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. The picture of the disciples keeping the children away evokes that familiar feeling that children are not always the most welcome of intrusions. This story is not an idealization of children. Children occupied the lowest stature in society and were not deserving of the Lord's attention. I am reminded that I must be humble. I am so unworthy of God's grace — this grace that is so undeserved, yet so feely offered. As I get older, I also find the image reassuring. These kids do not necessarily "know" a lot. They have not memorized all the scriptures and they do not remember each lesson they've ever been taught. Perhaps, I need not be frustrated with my (or with my lack of!) religious knowledge. These children knew everything necessary to make it into heaven.

I pray that I will continue to learn and to practice how to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, looking forward to being welcomed there by my Lord.



*Susie Willigrod and her husband Steve have been worshipping at St Francis for about 4 years. She is a devoted member of the choir family. They have 2 boys, one just in and one just out of college, and they are enjoying their status of "newly retired."*

# Thursday, March 22

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Exodus 7:25 – 8:19, Psalm 140 or 142, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, Mark 10:17-31

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*Devotional inspired by the Gospel reading of Mark 10:17-31*

Throughout my life, I have been blessed with a good education, a secure livelihood as well as the love of family and friends. On the other hand, the lure of the world does tempt me — when I seek to gain recognition from society while sensing it may not be God’s way; when coveting a peer’s success, or becoming like The Rich Man, so attached to my possessions that I do not want to let go of them. Such desires have at times exerted a strong pull on my will.

In our Gospel reading, a wealthy man asks Jesus, “Good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?” Jesus responds by listing six of the Ten Commandments on how we are to treat our neighbors. Intentionally, Jesus leaves out the commandment against coveting.

The wealthy man replies, “Ever since I was young, I have obeyed all these commandments.” With concern for the man’s spiritual well-being, Jesus responds, “You need only one thing: Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.” The rich man went away feeling sad in that he was asked to make such a sacrifice. Then, Jesus remarked to his disciples: “How hard it will be for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God!”

Wealth was considered a blessing from God then, so it was natural for his disciples to wonder who then can enter the kingdom? Jesus responds, “This is impossible for man but not for God; everything is possible for God.” If the rich man had some faith in Jesus, our Lord would have helped him let go of his attachment to his possessions. By selling them, he would have experienced the freedom and abundance of life God offers.

Unlike the Rich Man, Ebenezer Scrooge, in *A Christmas Carol*, learns that instead of hoarding money, the freedom and abundance of life that God offers is a matter of the heart – of giving generously to one’s fellowman and experiencing the joy that comes from touching someone else’s heart. I believe the following scripture in Matthew goes to the heart of the matter (excuse the pun): “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” ... “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”



*Art Grant is a retired elementary school teacher who enjoys serving as Lay Reader and Chalice Bearer at the 8:00 services. He is also a member of the South Bay Strummers, a ukulele group that does gigs singing and strumming throughout the year.*

# Friday March 23

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Exodus 9:13-35, Psalm 141 or 143:1-11, 2 Corinthians 4:1-12, Mark 10:32-45

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*“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*  
Mark 10:32-45

I love this scripture because it is so relatable. Among the various activities, duties, and jobs I have had in my life, the most rewarding have always been the ones where I serve others. There is a better sense of purpose and value associated with those jobs or duties because improving/enhancing someone else’s life just makes you feel better about yourself.

In this scripture, the initial request of James and John is superficial and shallow. They were asking why can’t we sit at your right and left side in the kingdom of God? Jesus’ response was my seat isn’t what you think it is. You don’t get a seat in the kingdom of God by just believing in me. You earn your seat by serving others. Jesus said “whoever would be great among you must be your servant.” In other words, you only increase your rank or status by serving others.

It reminds me of the Muhammad Ali quote “*service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth*”. This was what Jesus was all about. This scripture, Ali’s quote, and twenty five other bible verses teach us that the best value and happiness can be found by serving others. Serving others will give you a greater sense of purpose, spiritual meaning, and a better conscience. This is also why our church’s vision and mission are to love God, love others, and serve the world.



*Michael, Alyce, and their 8-year old son Ryan Metzroth joined St Francis in August 2016. Ryan attends St Francis Sunday School while Michael and Alyce enjoy the 10 o'clock service. They have been married 15 years, enjoy cooking together, and taking their dog Mei Mei to Redondo Beach for walks.*

# Saturday March 24

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Exodus 10:21-11:8, Psalm 42 or 43, 2 Corinthians 4:13-18, Mark 10:46-52

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*“By the day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.”* *Psalm 42 v. 8*

I always like to remember that God has unlimited love for us, as we should have for each other. The ways we express love can be up to our interpretation, whether it's verbally expressing it, or showing it through song, prayer or paying forward an act of kindness. The Lord's love is steadfast and always present, even in tough times. He never relinquishes his love, so why should we?

Being that my life is deeply involved with music, I personally like to think that I can express my love through performances and music. Does that mean everyone has to sing like they're in a musical all the time? Probably not, but since God's song is with us, maybe we can have a figurative song for our neighbors, too. Maybe we can dedicate a little extra time to think about others and how we can share our love with each other. In church, a large amount of our prayers are expressed through songs and hymns. So next time you hear a hymn, I invite you to think about the meaning of it and how it can be a prayer to the God of your life.



*Grace Buchen is a sophomore at Redondo Union High School. She enjoys playing flute in marching and concert band, as well as bass guitar in jazz band. In her otherwise (limited) free time, Grace enjoys trying new baking recipes and watching TV comedies. Grace and her family have been part of the St. Francis parish family since 2005.*

# Palm Sunday, March 25

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Philippians 2:5-11, Mark 14:1-47

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*“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”  
Philippians 2:5*

Yesterday I was returning home from an errand when I noticed a bumper sticker on the car in front of me. It read, *“Do you follow Jesus this closely?”* I laughed at the clever swipe this sticker was taking at those who dared tailgate the driver. It even made me check myself ... was I following too closely? I quickly ascertained that no, I was not following the car too closely, I was in fact giving the driver enough space.

But then I posed that question to myself as I continued my drive home. Do I follow Jesus that closely? Do I give Him enough space in my life? Though I'd like to think that I do, I know I miss the mark daily. If I were to take a rubric measure of my actions/attitude from yesterday alone, I'd MAYBE score above average, but certainly not an A. All too often, I find myself assuming the worst about someone or about a situation instead of approaching with neutrality. I get irritated with people. I can be impatient. I gripe about my “first world problems.” None of this is Christ-like, which makes it brutally clear that I do not follow Jesus that closely nearly as often as I'd like.

As we walk into church today, we will enter with joyful music, swinging palm branches in a gesture of welcoming Jesus. May we keep that image in our countenances as we leave the grounds of St. Francis and enter the community around us, where people will surely irritate us if we let them, where situations will surely test our patience if we let them. May we take a moment to place ourselves in the same mindset as Jesus when responding to others. May we intentionally tailgate Jesus figuratively, giving Him enough space to work inside us and following Him “this closely.”



*Kristina Pelá and Fabrizio, her wonderful husband of almost 25 (!! years, have been attending St. Francis since 2000. Kristina relishes serving as Chalice Bearer, Reader, and Prayer Team member, but her most cherished role is that of Mom to two of her greatest blessings, teenagers Tavio (18) and Sofia (almost 16).*

# Monday March 26

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Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12, Psalm 69:1-23, 2 Corinthians 1:1-7, Mark 11:12-25

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*(All Scriptures were considered in this devotional, but the main idea relies most on 2 Corinthians 1:1-7)*

Fifty-five years ago an American prophet and leader, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., found himself locked in a jail in Birmingham, Alabama, on the charge that he had not received a permit for the protest march he had led through the city a few days earlier. Eight white clergymen in the city had just published an open letter in the city's newspaper, urging King to go back to Atlanta and allow the racial issues in Birmingham, at that time considered perhaps the most racially-divided city in the South, to work themselves out under local leadership. In response, King penned his eloquent argument, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which he argued, passionately and persuasively, that fighting against unjust laws, or laws that were "out of harmony with the moral law" was the duty of all who loved and worshipped God.

Dr. King struggled with depression and anxiety throughout his life, and probably knew from the time that he started working to end segregation that he would not live to see forty. He died at the age of thirty-nine. I wonder what he would have made of today's Scriptures, which deal almost exclusively with grief, loss that all of us suffer from time to time, and with our anger at the unfairness of the world. We may have lost a loved one, dealt with a terrible setback in our career, watched in anguish as natural and man-made calamities trample communities into ashes, been dismayed by political divisions, or experienced pain through physical or mental illness. The verses from Lamentations recount the grief of the Jews as they were forced into exile, the Psalm of David is a plea to God for "deliverance from those who hate me," Paul's second letter to the Corinthians states that we "share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ," and the startling verses from Mark tell of Jesus's anger at the money changers in the Temple.

What comes through in all these readings is the need to stay true to our faith, and to our true selves in Christ. Paul expresses it best when he reminds us that just as we suffer, we also receive comfort from God, and that we need to pass on that comfort to others.

*Contd. on next page...*

# Monday March 26 (con'td.)

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Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12, Psalm 69:1-23, 2 Corinthians 1:1-7, Mark 11:12-25

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Martin Luther King ended his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail” with a plea to his white brethren that they could meet in fellowship. I close with the sincere, if perhaps less eloquent, words from Johnny Cash:

*No need to worry, no need to cry  
God's gonna bless you, by and by,  
You'll be blessed when the Lord gets through  
I've found out if you'll take one step he'll take two*



*Gayle Taylor has enjoyed the spiritual blessings of being part of the St. Francis family for many years and finds this church to be a central part of her life. She is also an English teacher and college counselor, an avid hiker and traveler, and a grandmother of two beautiful boys.*

# Tuesday, March 27

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Lamentations 1:17-22, Psalm 94, 2 Corinthians 1:8-22, Mark 11:27-33

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*As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been 'Yes and No.' For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not 'Yes and No'; but in him it is always 'Yes'. For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.' For this reason, it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God."*  
2 Corinthians 1:18-20

The absolute "Yes" to which St. Paul refers struck me very forcefully because it is very different from the word I usually encounter in my everyday life as an attorney. In the "lawyer world," the operative words are "Yes," "No" and "Maybe." I still remember the law school class some forty years ago when a noted professor was intensely questioning me on an issue until I came up with the right answer, which was "It depends."

It is comforting to know that for those who have faith in our Lord, the answer is – and always will be – "Yes." There is definiteness; there is certainty. One cannot help but be reminded of Jesus' rebuke to Thomas following his resurrection: "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.*" (John 20:29)

Paul's words above speak of "God's promises." Certainly, there is no greater promise than that of ever-lasting life. "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*" (John 3:16)

The word "Amen" means "So be it." We say this word several times during each Church service. "So be it" that through our faith in our Lord, there is the certainty of everlasting life.



*Dick Briggs has been a member of the Church since Spring 1983. He raised his sons Philip and Chris in the Church and met his wife Sara through the Church. He has served on the Vestry, been on the Stewardship Committee, and has served in other capacities over the years.*

# Wednesday, March 28

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Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12, Psalm 74, 2 Corinthians 1:23 - 2:11, Mark 12:1-11

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Reading the parable of the vineyard, its land owner and the tenants in Mark 12, I was struck at once by how improbable the plot was. What a breathtakingly audacious scheme by the tenants to grab all the profits and take possession of the vineyard! The drama was heightened by the apparently crazy actions of the landlord who continued to send messengers even though they were savagely beaten and killed, and, despite this, still sent his beloved son. Unbelievable!

Laws at this time did allow tenants to keep profits if an absentee landlord hadn't been heard from in a while. Believing they had struck pay dirt, you can imagine the tenants' disappointment as the messengers arrived one after another. With visions of wealth evaporating, the tenants' greed turned to violence and murder, eventually culminating in them killing the heir in hopes of acquiring the land. To our ears this seems nonsensical. However, the law provided that if there were no heirs, the property passed to those in possession of the land at the time.

It's easy to focus on the outrageous behavior of the tenants. When I suffer from "not enough syndrome," my fear causes me to fiercely grab control of whatever I can in a desperate desire to feel in control. I become less than God would have me be. But for me the landlord is the most compelling character. There I see a God who longs to be in relationship with us. Though we are blinded by delusions of grandeur and so desperate for control and safety that we behave in ways that separate us from our own truest selves, each other and God, it is God who continues to relentlessly pursue us.

God is the good parent; ever patient, sick with love for us, willing to do anything to save his or her children, even unto death. God loves us despite the crazed desperateness of our lives. It is an extravagant, illogical love that keeps coming for us no matter how often we reject him. It IS a story that doesn't make sense. The plot line is crazy because it is driven by our brokenness and met by an all-encompassing gracious love. There is nothing we can do to separate ourselves from the relentless love of God. But one thing we can know is that God will pursue us even into those dark places of shame, guilt, and brokenness. Wherever we find ourselves, God will be there.



*Alison Houghton-Kral is a passionate lover of story, and film...and espresso...and is always on the lookout for her next travel adventure....*

# Maundy Thursday, Mar 29

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14, Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26,  
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

*<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, <sup>2</sup>“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. <sup>4</sup>If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat”.*

*Exodus 12:1-4*

This reading, about sharing lambs, reminds me of an experience I had when I was eighteen years old and I went to work as an *au pair* girl (nanny) on the French island of Corsica.

Not long after arriving, I found a shell on the beach. Thinking it pretty, I strung it onto the gold chain alongside my gold cross. A few days later, my French boss saw the necklace and said “Where did you find that?” Thinking that she was referring to the shell I answered, “I found it on the beach.” She was immediately suspicious. She thought I was claiming to have found the gold chain and cross on the beach, not just the shell. She told me I must have stolen it from somewhere. I was banned from the household and pressed into service in their hotel washing and ironing sheets. I felt shunned.

But when Easter came, the family relented and included in me in their unique village tradition. After church, we hiked high up into the mountains, where a lamb was separated from its herd, slaughtered, and roasted over an open fire. The only problem was that I had given up eating meat two years earlier. As the family roasted the lamb, I decided that it was more important for me to share the lamb that the family had offered than to set myself apart and refuse to eat. After that day, the rift between us began to heal. To me, the flavor of that roasted meat was the flavor of trust—they trusted me to share a meal, and I trusted them to no longer treat me as a stranger.

Today’s reading reminds me that when God invites us to the feast, that this feast is for all of us, and that the joy in partaking of God’s bounty increases as we share what we have. The lamb gives to us and we don’t waste that gift, nor do we hoard it for ourselves, even when others may seem untrustworthy, or are strangers to us.



*Elizabeth Letts grew up on the Peninsula and moved back in 2013 after several decades on the East Coast. She has four children ranging in age from 12 to 26, and makes her living writing books. She enjoys being a new recruit to the St. Francis Choir.*

# Good Friday, March 30

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Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

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I found myself intrigued by the concept of “the Beloved Disciple,” mentioned several times in the Gospel of John — and nowhere else — and then realized I had never stopped reading long enough to question who that “Beloved Disciple” might have been, let alone why he or she was never identified.

This shadowy figure first appears in Chapter 13, during the Last Supper. Jesus tells the disciples he knows of his impending betrayal. “One of his disciples — the one whom Jesus loved — was sitting not only among the other disciples but immediately next to Jesus, a place of honor.” My thoughts flash to the picture in my head of the Last Supper. Simon Peter is on the other side of the Beloved Disciple, we can rule him out; Judas was never in my consideration to be the Beloved Disciple.

Later in Chapter 19, verses 26 and 27, as Jesus is on his way to crucifixion, his closest family members are present: his mother Mary, his mother’s sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. Standing with them is “the disciple whom he loved.” Jesus said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” The still unidentified disciple is a male. Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother,” and it is recounted that the Beloved Disciple takes Mary into his home and provides for her the rest of her life.

Many scholars better than I are still trying to figure out this mystery of who the Beloved Disciple is, and while many have settled on John, others firmly believe it to be Lazarus, and still others continue to wrestle with the question.

I can’t help but think that perhaps we are not to know who this Beloved Disciple may have been. He seems to serve the function of being the most faithful and true to Jesus in his love, his practices, and his beliefs. Thus he is the representation of the ideal follower of Jesus, never losing faith, never being swayed by the political turmoil swirling around Jesus. Jesus referred to all of his followers as disciples — he didn’t limit himself to the Twelve. I’ve settled on the idea that we were not meant to know specifically, but rather to use this Beloved Disciple as our example of how to follow Jesus. I can live with this conclusion and be comfortable with it.



*Jayne Bray’s Education for Ministry (EFM) study taught her the need to study anything about which you think you already know. As she read and wrote, she found herself looking forward to the revelation of Jayne, assuming she would reach a logical conclusion. She’s not a native of anywhere, she’s a native of everywhere. Her Dad was a Navy Chaplain so she moved a great deal, which exposed her to a rich cultural education, for which she is truly grateful. Her Mom did EFM, graduating in 1999, and encouraged Jayne to do the same. What she has learned is that although exploration and education are good and gratifying, there are things that we may never know the answers to, and that’s okay.*

# Holy Saturday, March 31

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Mark 16:1-2, Romans 6:4

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As I write this, a friend is on a red eye to the east coast. Her husband has been taken into emergency brain surgery. I think of the hours ticking away so slowly for her as she waits to change planes in San Francisco, and then land in the early hours of tomorrow morning, and then rush from the airport to the hospital. All that time trying desperately to keep her anxiety in check, praying for the new day, for new life, however it will be.

In today's reading from Mark, we learn that Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome have been waiting for the Sabbath to be over, for nearly 36 hours, until the break of dawn on Sunday, to buy spices as soon as the shops open so that they can go quickly and anoint the body of Jesus. It must have been agonizing for those women to wait, driven by the importance of a proper anointing, of honoring the body of the dead, of doing it right and before it is too late, for someone they loved. What they see and what they don't see changes everything. They can barely breathe. From that moment, nothing is the same, all is new.

I have been reflecting on "newness" in Paul's letter to the Romans: "*Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*" A new breath. A new beginning. A new chance. A new day. It is that gift of fresh air, freedom, joy, and relief when we say together, "He is risen!" We walk with Christ forward, into the newness and fullness of life, however it will be. Let us rejoice and be glad.



*Judith Lyons ("Jude") is an intern at St. Francis, fulfilling her Field Education as part of her seminary training. She is happily doing as many things as she can and getting to know as many people as she can at while she is here! She wishes that her daughters and grandsons lived closer so they could come here, too!*

# Easter Sunday, April 1

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Acts 10:34-43, Isaiah 25:6-9, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, John 20:1-18

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Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Such a joyous day it is!

And a joyous day it should be... On this day St. Francis Church is fully decked out in white vestments and Easter lilies. We break out in Alleluias and Amens. Perhaps the sun even seems to be shining brighter on this day. Easter is a joyous day because we as Christians celebrate Jesus' victory over death, both over his own death as well as ours.

I take joy also in the Apostle Peter's words in our Acts reading, that "*God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*" And in our Isaiah passage for this day, the Lord "*will make for all peoples a feast of rich food... he will destroy the shroud that is cast over all peoples... wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth.*"

*Every nation. All peoples. All faces.*

I take joy on this day that God cares for all, loves all, provides for all, restores us all, and even dies and conquers death for all. That is the power and expanse of God's love. I take comfort in knowing and experiencing this love.

There's a moment in one of our Eucharistic prayers that we pray on Wednesdays and on Sundays where the words on the page are "Drink this, all of you; This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for *many* for the forgiveness of sins." These are familiar words. But if you follow along closely, you will hear me say *all* instead of *many* sometimes with a little smile on my face.

I had picked up this practice from years of listening to a bishop and a priest mentor pray in this particular way, out of a deep conviction that Christ died for all and conquered death for all. Each time we pray this prayer and each time I change that one word, I am reminded of the power of God's love for us. Yes, indeed, for *every* nation, *all* peoples, *all* faces.

On this day we celebrate such love. Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Such a joyous day it is!



*The Reverend Peter Huang is the Associate Rector at St. Francis. He aspires to be a wordsmith. Chances are you'll find him working on a crossword puzzle, reading a book or the newspaper, or lost in thought trying to come up with a groan-inducing pun. Peter and his wife, Christine, enjoy visiting dogs at their local humane society.*



# Easter Service dates and times

## Palm Sunday

Sunday, March 25 at 10am – One service - Main Church

## Maundy Thursday

Thursday, March 29 at 6:00 pm Parish Hall

## Good Friday

Friday, March 30 12:10 pm in the Church

Friday, March 30 7:00 pm in the Chapel

## The Great Vigil of Easter

Saturday, March 31 at 7:00 pm in the Chapel Patio and Chapel

## Easter Day

Sunday, April 1st

8am in the Chapel, Rite 1 Holy Communion

10am in the Main Church, Rite II Holy Communion.

# More Resources for Lent

## Ash Wednesday

**Lent Quiet Day**— 9:30am - noon. - Exploring the Labyrinth

**Holy Communion with Distribution of Ashes**— 12:10 & 7:00pm—Bishop Diane preaching at 7:00pm.

**Ashes to Go!** - 2-4pm, Malaga Cove, In front of the market.

## Lenten Suppers

what's in your spiritual toolbox? tools for grace, for life and for church,  
- Wednesday evenings - Feb 21, Mar 7, 14 & 21

## Episcopal and Anglican Spiritual Writers

Sundays after both services Sundays, February 18, 25 and March 11

February 18 - Nora Gallagher (Jude Lyons)

February 25 - George Orwell (Gayle Taylor)

March 11 - Dorothy Sayers (Peter Marshall)

## Karl Jenkins "Stabat Mater"

**Sunday, March 18**

"Understanding the *Stabat Mater*" Class, 11:30-12:30

**Sunday, March 25**

St Francis Choir presents *Stabat Mater* by Karl Jenkins 4:00pm

## Acknowledgments

Contributors: *The people of St. Francis*, Devotional Coordinator: *Kristina Pelá*, Designer: *Susan Marshall*, Editor: *Peter Huang*

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