



FINDING
THE
POWER
TO
CHANGE

PLENTY

2016

Lent . . . A Season of Longing

“Longing is the quickening of the heart
that calls forth change.” *

May this Lenten season be a time of holy change ...
and of sacred metanoia.

“There should always be a healthy tension between the life
we have settled for and the longing for God that still calls us.

In this sense, our longings are the messages of our
unlived life, calling us to attention and action while we still
have time to explore fields where the Treasure dwells.” *

May you engage in the longing ...
in the search for God ...
in the unearthing of treasure ...
and the Treasured One.

And may your greatest gift be the discovery that the
One you long for ... longs for you.

Jennifer Rausch, PBVM

*Quotes adapted from *To Bless the Space Between Us*,
John O'Donohue, pp 25-26

**Ash Wednesday
February 10, 2016**

“Return to me with all your heart ...” Joel 2:12-18

With ALL your heart? Every last bit of it? What then would I have left to give to everyone else who needs some of me? Yes! ALL of it ... and to prove it look at the palms we received less than a year ago which have now been fully consumed in fire, ground, and made into the ashes now adorning our foreheads. All of the palm was consumed to be made into a cross on our heads. A cross that held a man who consumed ALL our sins – not a portion, not mine alone, not just yours. God isn't asking for our whole body, just our whole heart so that through his love ALL that we do may reflect his glory and love for each of us – even the rest of those who have need of us. Can I give him all of my heart so that everyone I encounter can always see his love in me?

God, journey with me this Lenten season at every moment and with every step, thought, and breath so that I may indeed give my whole heart to you.

Judi A. Moritz, PBVM Associate

Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-14, 17
2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday
February 11, 2016

“Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it, but whoever insists on keeping his life will lose it; and what profit is there in gaining the whole world when it means forfeiting one’s self?” Luke 9:24-25

One of the things I value is the relationship I have with God. During this Lenten season I am going to do my best to continue to strengthen that relationship.

On this second day of Lent, I am challenged to give away my life so I might have life. This Lent I will “give away my life” by spending more time in quiet prayer, seeing God in others and denying myself in little ways ... for example, refraining from a negative comment. You, the reader, most likely, can think of many other ways of denying self!

How will you “give your life away” this Lenten season so you might have life?

Janice Hancock, PBVM

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 9:22-25

**Friday
February 12, 2016**

“My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit; God, do not spurn a broken, humbled heart.” Psalm 51:19

A broken spirit ... overcome by grief or despair ... when we are weak, and hurt so badly that our pain is unbearable... When we have pain and challenges in our lives, we cry for help. God knows and hears our prayers. Heart-shattered lives ready for love, don't for a moment escape God's notice.

What is my reaction when I know someone is hurting physically, mentally or spiritually? Do I take time to listen? Or do I look the other way? Let us humble our hearts and take time to listen; be patient and truly listen. We may not have all the answers they need at the time, but offering a prayer will bring comfort. Knowing someone cares can bring peace to a weary soul.

Darla Budden, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 58:1-9; Psalm 51:3-6, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday
February 13, 2016

**“If you watch your step on the Sabbath and don’t use my holy day for personal advantage; if you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God’s holy day as a celebration; if you honor it by refusing ‘business as usual,’ making money, running here and there – then you’ll be free to enjoy God!”
Isaiah 58:13-14**

For an observant Jew, Sabbath means that the normal workday is suspended and replaced by a special time of prayer, family, celebration, leisure, and enjoyment. Sabbath is honored by lighting candles, gathering in worship and prayer, blessing children, singing songs, keeping silence, walking, reading scripture, making love, sharing a meal...

Today we are considerably more casual and careless about observing the Sabbath and we are poorer, both religiously and humanly, because of this. Much of our tiredness and sense of being over-burdened comes from not having a regular Sabbath in our lives. – Richard Rohr

When was the last time I slipped away from the ordinary demands of the workday to engage in Sabbath?

Choose Sabbath!

Julia Wingert, PBVM

Isaiah 58:9-14; Psalm 86:1-6; Luke 5:27-32

**First Sunday of Lent
February 14, 2016**

“You who live in the secret place of Elyon, spend your nights in the shelter of Shaddai, saying to Yahweh, ‘My refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust!’” Psalm 91:1-2

We say “my God in whom I trust” but do we really trust God to do what is best for us?

Broken Dreams

As children bring their broken toys
With tears for us to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to God
Because he was my friend.
But then instead of leaving him
In peace to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help
With ways that were my own.
At last I snatched them back
And cried, “How can you be so slow?”
“My child,” he said, “What could I do?
You never did let go.”

Let Go and Let God!

Letting Go and Letting God is not easy. It takes a lot of practice but when we really trust God with our concerns, he does bring peace of mind.

Mary Lou Mauss, PBVM Associate

Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15
Romans 10:8-13; Matthew 4:1-13

**Monday
February 15, 2016**

“Amen I say to you what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.” Matthew 25:45

Goals are part of every aspect of life today. Life revolves around goals and action plans to achieve them. Corporations, sports teams and teachers all set goals and create ways to reach them. Both readings today contain a list: the Leviticus reading is a set of negative actions while Matthew’s scripture is the Lord’s list of ways to live the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These readings challenge me to select two works of mercy as goals and then create an action plan that turns my deeds and words into habits of mercy for the least ones.

Lord, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, inspire and energize me to step up to the plate becoming involved in parish and civic groups’ works of mercy projects that are a hand up rather than a hand out to the poor and marginalized. May all organizing groups bat a thousand in reaching their works of mercy goals to bring hope and joy to the least ones.

Marilou Irons, PBVM

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19:8-10, 15; Matthew 25:31-46

**Tuesday
February 16, 2016**

“Yet just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55: 10-11

God’s word has power to change and transform our lives. Just as the rain and melting snow make the ground come to life and bear great fruit, so too God’s word has the power to penetrate our dry, barren heart and make it whole again. By reading the Scriptures, we listen to Christ.

Lord, let your word take root in our hearts and transform us. Help us to walk in the way of love and holiness. Let your word guide and shape the way we think, act and pray.

Jean Lange, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19; Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday
February 17, 2016

"A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew with in me." Psalm 51:12

Isn't it interesting that when push comes to shove, we know exactly what we have to do and we do it. I find out I'm sick, so I start eating more healthy; I am faced with financial problems, so I cut up my credit cards; I am dying, so I try to get myself right with the Lord.

In both our first reading from Jonah and the reference to the Jonah story in today's Gospel, the people are warned that the judgement time is coming. The people from Nineveh immediately kick into action replacing all their evil ways with acts that will please God thus saving themselves and their city.

Today's psalm gives us a list of what we need to do now to be ready for judgement: acknowledge my sins to create a clean heart, tell others of the wonder of our God, and stay steadfast in seeing God in all things and praising God for all we have been given.

Each day brings judgement time one day closer for each of us. What will I do today on the list above to prepare for my meeting with God?

Dianne McDermott, PBVM Associate

Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Luke 11:29-32

Thursday
February 18, 2016

**“ASK and it will be given to you;
SEEK and you will find;
KNOCK and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks,
finds; And to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”
Matthew 7:7-8**

ASK – what is that special grace that your heart longs to receive this day? **It will be given to you.**

SEEK – to find the Lord in the face of each person you meet this day. **You will find Him.**

KNOCK – with hands extended in open surrender to the graces and the people you encounter in this Thursday of the First Week of Lent. **The door will be opened to you.**

REMEMBER – “For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Cheryl Demmer, PBVM

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138:1-3, 7-8; Matthew 7:7-12

Friday
February 19, 2016

“I trust in the LORD; my soul trusts in God’s word. My soul waits for the LORD more than sentinels wait for the dawn. Let Israel wait for the LORD.” Psalm 130:5-6

In an interview with Judy Cannato, *Sustained by Holy Mystery (LCWR Occasional Papers, Summer 2011)* she offered, “The contemplative stance, essentially the capacity to be aware of Love’s presence everywhere, is one that is fundamental to discerning what is emerging ... and knowing how to respond. The willingness to risk our energies requires commitment ... to the voice of the Spirit which at times may appear to stand in contradiction to anything we’ve imagined before. This all requires engagement of the imagination and trust that the imagination is fueled by Spirit.”

How might we nurture a radical openness to the possibilities around us calling to be birthed? Who knows? We might find amazement – life from death?

Barb Ressler, PBVM Associate

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1-6, 7-8; Matthew 5:20-26

**Saturday
February 20, 2016**

**“... walk in God’s ways
... observe God’s decrees
... hearken to God’s voice.” Deuteronomy 26:17**

These lines offer a possible blueprint for our Lenten journey. They are direct and clear, guiding us on our path of “being perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48 They serve as a blueprint for our Lenten process which leads us to our Easter goal: “You will be a people sacred to your God.” Deuteronomy 26:19

Let me translate that last line into a bulletin board caption I highlighted to greet (and to challenge) my yearly contingent of new junior high students: “I am good and getting better.”

Happy journey ... happy process ... happy perfectedness ... happy Lent.

Jennifer Rausch, PBVM

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8
Matthew 5:43-48

**Second Sunday of Lent
February 21, 2016**

“Then there was a voice out of the cloud, ‘This is my Son, the Chosen! Listen to him.’” Luke 9:35

This unparalleled experience left Peter, John and James speechless, not a word of it to anyone.

While we don’t expect to hear “a voice out of the cloud,” we can expect in our Lenten journey to know God is speaking to us: in our times of contemplative prayer, in Scripture; in the prophetic voices of those working toward systemic change for justice; in the cries of the displaced and homeless; in the eagerness of those in RCIA programs; in the hunger of millions for cessation of war and violence; in your child-spouse-friend-community members; in nature as it is revealed each day; in ... There is no place where God is not and no place where God is not speaking to us, pointing out the lived message of Jesus.

Be attentive today. “Listen to him.”

*Colleen Vlasisavljevich,
PBVM Associate and Former Member*

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14
Philippians 3:17 - 4:1; Luke 9:28-36

**Monday
February 22, 2016**

“Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.” Psalm 23:4

At this time in the history of our world we are reminded too often of the dark valleys and evils threatening humanity. Terrorist groups have infiltrated many countries of the world, using bombs and guns to threaten and take over cities. Deranged and angry humans have gunned down individuals and groups of their fellow humans in our own country. Sometimes it is difficult to remember that God is with us through all of these evil rampages. We need to pray and remember to trust in God with courage and faith.

Let us pray in times of national and world tragedies for the victims and their families. Let us pray also for the perpetrators and their followers to have a change of heart to love, not hate, their fellow human beings.

Dolores Zieser, PBVM

1 Peter 5:1-4; Psalm 23:1-3, 4-6; Matthew 16:13-19

Tuesday
February 23, 2016

“They preach but they do not practice.” Matthew 23:3

Sometimes I cringe when I read or hear these words in Scripture. I can do the same as the Pharisees. I remember teaching first graders to respect differences. On the playground, I would see this attitude, “You are different so I need to ignore you or exclude you.” I encouraged the children to think and say, “You are different so I want to get to know you.” In the next moment, I would see a certain parent in the hall coming toward me. Immediately I started thinking, “This is the arrogant parent who thinks her son is perfect. I wonder how I can avoid having a conversation with her.” Oops! What happened to my curiosity, openness and love? Sometimes I fall short of living what I teach.

Loving and forgiving, God, during this time of Lent, help us to renew our efforts to serve others in our actions as well as our words and to live as authentic disciples with integrity and humility.

Joan Brincks, PBVM

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23
Matthew 23:1-12

**Wednesday
February 24, 2016**

“Rather, whoever wishes to be the first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:26-28

This is one of my favorite passages in scripture. It is a reminder of what it is that we are on this earth to do. We are here to serve others as Christ served. When we give up our own ego and keep service to others the focus in our lives, we are building God's kingdom.

Dear Lord, as I begin my day, help me to humbly see where I can be of service to those I meet today. Let me be your humble servant and your hands and feet upon this earth.

Michelle Covey, PBVM Associate

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31:5-6, 14-16; Matthew 20:17-28

Thursday
February 25, 2016

“Once there was a rich man who dressed in purple and linen and feasted splendidly every day. At his gate lay a beggar named Lazarus ... Lazarus longed to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.” Luke 16:19-21

This Gospel story is a simple narrative about two people. One is a poor man named Lazarus who is in dire need of help. The other is a rich man who has the means to assist Lazarus in his need. Lazarus’ needs are small and would require very little for the rich man to help him. Unfortunately, the rich man never got around to helping Lazarus. Each of us sees the story of Lazarus being repeated every day. It seems there is a tendency to place our priorities on things, rather than on people, especially the poor in our midst.

Instead of closing our eyes and ears to difficult situations, let us remember this: When we see something or hear something, let us say and do something.

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those people throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands, this day, their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give them peace and joy. Amen.
– Mother Theresa

Margaret Anne Kramer, PBVM

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 16:19-31

Friday
February 26, 2016

“They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.” Genesis 37:28

No comforting, sweet stories today: the Scriptures plunge us into the reality of betrayal. Brothers traffick their brother. And, a landowner’s son dies at the hands of brutal tenants. The world can be a harsh place. Life can be brutal. Today’s readings address that.

The pain of betrayal reaches deep. It’s effects can be long lasting. Once betrayed, it can be difficult to extract oneself from that devastation, difficult to trust again. Some become permanently snared in betrayal’s emotional aftermath.

Joseph’s example can help us deal with betrayals we’ve yet to overcome ourselves. He didn’t allow self-pity or regret to prevail in his life. He chose not to dwell on his pain nor wallow in it. Moving forward, trusting in God, Joseph created a new, better future for himself. Later, when faced with his traitorous siblings, he responded – not punitively, but heroically – with compassion and love.

Am I “stuck” in the aftermath of a betrayal?
Am I ready to extract myself? What do I need to release to free myself?

Who or what awaits my forgiveness (perhaps without asking for it)?

What can I do to counter human trafficking?

Billie Greenwood, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28; Psalm 105:16-21
Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Saturday
February 27, 2016

“Who is there like you, the God who removes guilt and pardons sin for the remnant of his inheritance ... You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins.” Micah 7:18-19

“The Lord is kind and merciful... For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.” Psalm 103:3-4, 11-13

The purpose of this Year of Mercy is to remind us of what mercy is, that God is merciful, that Jesus is the embodiment of God's mercy, and that the followers of Jesus continue his mission of mercy in the ministries of the Church, as well as in their personal lives of faith.

“The Year of Mercy is a time to return to the basics,” says Pope Francis, “to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters.” In other words, it is a time to receive God's mercy and show it to others.

Perhaps the most radical statement Jesus ever made is “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.” God's compassion is described by Jesus not simply to show me how willing God is to feel for me, or to forgive my sins and offer me new life and happiness, but to invite me to become like God and to show the same compassion to others as he is showing me. – Kevin Spinale, S.J.

“Bless the LORD, my soul; all my being, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, my soul; and do not forget all his gifts.” Psalm 103:1-2

Deb Jasper, PBVM Associate

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

**Third Sunday of Lent
February 28, 2016**

“An angel of the Lord appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush.” Exodus 3:2

Think more about what Moses did than what he saw. He stopped. He paid attention. He was aware.

Like Moses have we seen remarkable things? Perhaps our first step is to slow down and pay attention.

Find a few minutes today to slow down and be aware. Where might we see remarkable things? Perhaps a snowflake, a sunset or the face of a loved one will speak to us of God’s remarkable gifts and presence in our lives.

Corine Murray, PBVM

Exodus 3:1-8,13-15; Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11
1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12; Luke 13:1-9

**Monday
February 29, 2016**

“My soul thirsts for God, the living God.” Psalm 42:2

The Message translation of this same verse reads, “I want to drink God, deep draughts of God. I’m thirsty for God-alive.” Sometimes a different translation can enable us to hear a scripture with fresh, new ears. This translation of this verse helps me to get in touch with my deep yearning for God.

Take some time to repeat again and again, “I want to drink God, deep draughts of God. I’m thirsty for God-alive.” Then sit in silence with your yearning.

Be awake to God-alive this day!

Carol Witry, PBVM Associate

2 Kings 5:1-15; Psalm 42:2-3; 43:3-4; Luke 4:24-30

**Tuesday
March 1, 2016**

“Then Peter, approaching asked him, ‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus responded, ‘I say to you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” Matthew 18:21-22

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant awakens us to our relationship with our brothers and sisters and God! It reminds us we must be a forgiving people, not holding on to some unpleasant event or confrontation with another. God wants and expects us to always forgive and to treat others as we ourselves want to be treated. A framed stitchery in our home reads, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” As we forgive others we let go of our anger and not only is the other healed, but so are we!

Lord, Jesus, help me to be a forgiving person. Let me love not only those who are easy to love, but also those not so easy to love. Remind me my life here on earth will be judged by the same measuring stick I use to judge others. Let me be a loving and forgiving child of God!

Pat Albrecht, PBVM Associate

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25:4-9; Matthew 18:21-35

**Wednesday
March 2, 2016**

“Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live ... Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations ...” Deuteronomy 4:1, 6

When my focus is on my rights, what I want, and what I think I need, all law seems restrictive. Our God, who is LOVE, sets guidelines that foster LIFE and more LOVE, not fear and control. What a great, good God is ours!

God of Life, today help me be large-hearted and not short-sighted, focusing on the insignificant. May I live in the present moment, lavishing love on all that surrounds me. May your Kingdom come.

Marge Healy, PBVM

Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9
Psalm 147:12-13,15-16,19-20; Matthew 5:17-19

**Thursday,
March 3, 2016**

**“Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper. But they obeyed not, nor did they pay heed.”
Jeremiah 7:23-24**

Recently I attended a meeting in which Archbishop Michael Jackels spoke to a large crowd of church leaders in our area. His message was to encourage us to strengthen our parish by being sensitive to our need to share our time, talent and money with church and charity. We cannot stand by as passive onlookers or expect someone else to do it.

In the above reading from Jeremiah the people obeyed not, nor did they pay heed. It seems there are too many people today who do not pay heed to the way of God.

Lord God, we pray for those who seem to be caught up in the secular world and turn their backs to you. Help us to build the kingdom of God through true Christian discipleship during this Lenten season and beyond.

Harry Stanton, PBVM Associate

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; Luke 11:14-23

Friday
March 4, 2016

“There is no other commandment greater than these.’ The scribe said to Jesus, ‘Well said, teacher. You are right in saying he is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.’”

Mark 12:31-33

Today’s gospel reading from Mark, especially the major portion of this text, the Greatest Commandment, is one we can all recite by heart. Often when we’ve heard something so many times, we tend to dismiss it and decide that we really can’t learn anything new or different. We’ve heard it all before. But maybe we need to look at the Gospel more closely and with the heart of the scribe who responded to Jesus in today’s reading.

What “burnt offerings and sacrifices” do I bring to God this Lent? Am I more concerned about what I’m “doing and why” for Lent rather than what I’m “becoming” this Lent? Are my sacrifices and offerings leading me to love God above all else and to love and care for my brothers and sisters as I love and care for myself? Could Jesus say to me what he said to the scribe, “You are not far from the kingdom of God”?

Janet Stelken, PBVM

Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81:6-11, 14,17; Mark 12:28-34

**Saturday
March 5, 2016**

**“For everyone who exalts himself (herself) will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself (herself) will be exalted.”
Luke 18:14**

Today's Gospel is the familiar parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. How interesting that this gospel occurs halfway through the Lenten season. What perfect timing! It provides a thought provoking scenario for you to reflect on your Lenten journey thus far. Are you traveling like the Pharisee, who is satisfied with himself and unconcerned about those journeying with him? On the other hand, are you like the tax collector who, in his humility, knows he needs God's mercy more than anything or anyone?

O God, there is something of the Pharisee and the tax collector in all of us. We need your mercy and forgiveness. Instill in us the humility to recognize you as our inspiration and strength.

Sheila Kane, PBVM

Hosea 6:16; Psalm 51:3-4, 18-21; Luke 18:9-14

**Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 6, 2016**

“My son ... everything I have is yours.” Luke 15:31

I can't help but wonder about the deep disappointment the father in Luke's gospel must have felt toward both of his sons. The younger son opts to split with his inheritance and paint the town red. The older son seems totally ungrateful in the midst of his father's generosity. Yet love overcomes disappointment. The father welcomes the prodigal son home with open arms. There is no “I told you so” or finger-wagging. The father shows patience and restraint with the older son in spite of his pity party.

There are times when I feel I have disappointed God, squandering the gifts I have been given. I only need to recall St. Paul's message that God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and will not count our trespasses against us.

Reflect on the Lord's Prayer this day. How does it feel to be in relationship with a God who readily continues to “forgive us our trespasses?”

Bernie Graves, PBVM Associate

Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 34:2-7
2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Monday
March 7, 2016

“Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create; for I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight; I will rejoice in Jerusalem and exult in my people.” Isaiah 65:17-19

It is easy to think of these new heavens and new earth as something esoteric, beyond the earth, waters, sky and reality of persons and objects with which and with whom we daily live. It is more of a challenge to remember that we must be the change that we long for. What concrete changes must be made in this world in which we live, and what can I/we do about them? What do I do about changing a “throw away” culture, a world of waste, a world where it is not acceptable to be diverse, a “variant” whether that means culture, clothing, language, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, religion, and so on. What will I do today about studying how I can support the ongoing evolution of a new heaven and a new earth?

Perhaps I might like to listen to Michael Ball’s version of “Love Changes Everything” to support my efforts. This is readily available on YouTube.

Maura McCarthy, PBVM

Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13; John 4:43-54

Tuesday
March 8, 2016

“Once more he measured off a thousand, but there was now a river through which I could not wade; for the water had risen so high that it had become a river that could not be crossed except by swimming.” Ezekiel 47: 5

When the prophet Ezekiel describes being brought to the entrance of the temple, there is no doubt of a progression in the amount of water he has to go through. From a trickle, to ankle deep, then up to his waist and finally being unable to touch the bottom and having to swim to get to the other side. This reminds me of the growth that can happen in our faith and trust in God. Our hearts and minds start to know God as we are taught by others – our parents, priests, and others in our church who lead us from the river bank into the Baptismal stream of life-giving water. If we allow ourselves to go “deeper”, the secure footing of the dry ground changes, and we find ourselves being called to a more intimate trust; a belief that God will keep us afloat and get us safely to the “other side” even if it seems that we sometimes get ourselves into places in our lives where we are in “over our heads”. If we have found that our faith gives us the power to believe that Jesus will either take our hand and lead us to secure footing or, as in the gospel reading for today, he will simply tell us to pick up our mats and walk, then we have been blessed abundantly. The gift of faith that we have in normal, everyday times, can be nurtured and allowed to grow through a continually expanding, loving relationship with God. Then, in times of trial and pain, we will be bouyed up by God’s presence in our lives. Are you ready to take the plunge and deepen your faith and trust in God and in his power?

God of the life-giving waters of Baptism, help me to keep walking with you, deeper and deeper into a knowledge of your all powerful presence. Help me to avoid the churning waters of life that threaten to pull me under in the currents of this world’s turbulence. When I am unsure of my footing, please help me to place my trust in you and know that I will swim (and not sink) as you guide me to the peaceful waters of your eternal kingdom.

Karen Bonfig, PBVM Associate

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; John 5:1-16

Wednesday
March 9, 2016

“Thus says the Lord: In a time of favor I answer you, on the day of salvation I help you.” Isaiah 49:8

Many phrases of this excerpt from Isaiah remind me of Psalm 23.

“Along the ways they shall find pasture.” Isaiah 49:9

“In green pastures you let me graze.” Psalm 23:2

“They shall not hunger or thirst ... guides them beside springs of water.” Isaiah 49:10

“To safe waters you lead me ... You set a table before me ... My cup overflows.” Psalm 23: 2, 5

“... leads and guides them...” Isaiah 49:10

“You guide me along the right path.” Psalm 23:3

“The Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted.” Isaiah 49:13

“Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life.” Psalm 23:6

The Responsorial Psalm 145 reiterates, “The Lord is gracious and merciful ... abounding in love ... good to all, compassionate to every creature ... just in all your ways, faithful in all your works ... near to all who call upon you.”

Do I trust the words, “I will never forget you?” Am I embodying these divine characteristics in my relationships?

Ellen Mary Garrett, PBVM

Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalm 145:8-9, 13-14, 17-18; John 5:17-30

**Thursday
March 10, 2016**

“So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.” Exodus 32:14

Ambivalence. I feel it often as I try to make decisions and I sift through my contradictory emotions. I find ambivalence in the mixture of desires, feelings and thoughts expressed by God as he changes his mind about what to do with the “stiff-necked” people of Israel. I find it as I reflect on the path of Moses with the people. In today’s reading he protects and supports them. Other days he seemed ready to give up on them. I know from reading Scripture that God’s love is under it all like a deep river current which in the end decides the direction of all. Lord, keep me rooted in the deep current of your love as I make decisions and live.

What is the deep current under your feelings, thoughts and decisions? How do we nourish a deep current of love in our world?

Rita Menart, PBVM

Exodus 32:7-1; Psalm 106:19-23; John 5:31-47

Friday
March 11, 2016

“But many of the crowd began to believe in him, and said, ‘When the Messiah comes, will he perform many more signs that this man has done?’” John 7:31

It is hard to believe that the people who watched everything Jesus did and heard everything he preached expected more. Really, didn't Jesus do enough to convince them that he was the Messiah they were waiting for? But aren't we like that sometimes? Okay, aren't I like that some times? It's kind of like, “What have you done for me lately, God?”

And the truth is I have a short memory and often forget all that God has done for me and given me. I am blessed but I don't always acknowledge that or appreciate that. And worse than that, I don't think about everything I have been given as a gift from God. How do I use the gifts given to me? Am I grateful? Do I share my gifts? Do I use my time, talents, and treasure to build the kingdom of God here and now?

Maybe now is the time for you and for me to reflect on all these things! We are fast approaching Holy Week when we revisit the greatest gift ever given – Jesus' death and resurrection. So the question becomes how much more could he have done?

**Is today the day I drop to my knees in profound gratitude?
Yes, Jesus, dying for me is more than enough!!!**

Maureen Utter, PBVM Associate

Wisdom 2:1, 12-23
Psalm 34:17-21, 23; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

**Saturday
March 12, 2016**

“You, O Lord of hosts, O just judge, searcher of mind and heart ... Jeremiah 12:20

**“O searcher of heart and soul, O just God ...”
Psalm 7: 10**

“Nicodemus asked ‘Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?’” John 7:51

Searching Our Hearts

In the midst of controversy Nicodemus challenges those attempting to judge, to question and identify Jesus and his origins. How easily prejudice can creep into our lives, perhaps without notice. In a world of suspicion and fear of those who are “other”, may we move beyond judging to seeing others with a heart of mercy.

Who are those close to me who call me to see with a heart of mercy?

Who are the “strangers” in my life that call me to a merciful heart?

O searcher of heart and soul, as you love me without condition, help me to see others as you see them, as you also love them without condition. May the richness of your heart of mercy live in me and them.

Diana Blong, PBVM

Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7:2-3, 9-12; John 7:40-53

**Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 13, 2016**

“Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not.” Isaiah 43:18

As our Easter Celebration approaches, may we stay in the present moment not getting carried away by future fears or past disappointments. God calls us to times of quiet; time to pause, breathe, rest, return to our center. May we remember that our pain and stress is very real, but does not define us. May we remember those things that have gone well. May we also rest in God’s loving arms, big enough to hold all of our stress and worry. – Thoughts from Kathy Galleher, Ph.D

Can we view the challenges and hard times as moments of grace; as times when we might practice holding these things deep within us?

Thank you God for family, friends and those around us that have shared our lives – the dark hours, the challenges, the struggles and strife, the good times, the laughter, the love and the cheer. Help us to recognize all these times as gift. May we grow in our love for you and in our ability to rest in your loving arms. Amen.

Rita Cameron, PBVM

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126:1-6
Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

**Monday
March 14, 2016**

**“I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, they shall possess the light of life.”
John 8:1-20**

Jesus has shown mercy to a woman in what appears to be a seemingly hopeless situation. How many of us have been, or are, in what seems to be a hopeless situation? Mercy means kindness and forgiveness. Today Jesus reassures us that he has come as the light of the world to manifest God's mercy and forgiveness to all. Because of hardened hearts, resistance toward Jesus intensifies. Yet, Jesus continues to faithfully make his way toward Jerusalem.

**When have you/I carelessly judged another or denied another mercy?
Seek ways to practice withholding judgement of others.**

Our Presentation Directional Statement calls us to be more attuned to the situations of the innocent, especially women and children. Who among us needs the mercy of God?

Carla Popes, PBVM

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62
Psalm 23:1-6; John 8:12-20

**Tuesday
March 15, 2016**

**“Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me.’”
John 8:28**

Jesus came on earth to teach us, to lead us to God. Let us spend time this Lent uncovering and growing in our understanding of “who God is”. We need to understand who God is, so we can have a relationship with God. We spend time getting to know community members, our spouse, friends, co-workers because we want to build a relationship with them that leads to a deeper understanding of who they are. How much more important it is to know who God is in our lives.

**What/who in my life is leading me to God?
What can I do these last days of Lent to strengthen who
God is in my life?**

Lynn Mary Wagner, PBVM

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102:2-3,16-21; John 8:21-30

**Wednesday
March 16, 2016**

**“Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, ‘If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”
John 8:31-32**

Jesus tells me so much in this one verse. Do I reflect on “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples” or “you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free?” I choose the latter today; but tomorrow I might choose differently. That’s what makes the scriptures so alive.

Sin enslaves me; and I want to be free from sin. But that’s easier said than done. I want to never judge, never get angry, never be selfish. But I am too weak. I need the grace of the Holy Spirit to overcome my weaknesses.

Holy Spirit, I want to be like Jesus and his mother, Mary. Come to me when my weak nature comes between you and me. I love you and praise you and thank you for my many blessings. Help me when I stray from my journey to you.

Janet Leonard, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Daniel 3:52-56; John 8:31-42

Thursday
March 17, 2016

**“Look to the Lord and be strong; seek God’s face always.”
Psalm 105:4**

As we reflect on the covenant that God made with Abraham in the first reading, and Jesus’ promise in the Gospel that “if anyone keeps my word, they will not experience death,” we are challenged to be strong in our own commitment to be disciples. As St. Patrick, whose feast we celebrate today, we are called to be missionaries where we are. Carrying Nano’s lantern, as the sisters who went before us did, we will more clearly be able to seek God’s face in the winding lanes where we walk.

Where can I find God’s face today? In a fleeting moment of passing someone with whom I work, who seems to need a smile? In a chance encounter with someone who needs me to stop and listen? In the presence of someone who needs a kind word? I am blest to see God’s face each day, but sometimes I do not recognize that presence until I reflect on it later in the day. My schedule, or my to-do list keeps me from “looking to the Lord ... and seeking God’s face always.” May this Lenten season give me the grace to truly look and seek God in others.

Paula Schwendinger, PBVM

Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105:4-9; John 8:51-59

**Friday
March 18, 2016**

“He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized and there he remained.” John 10:41

Wow, what a beautiful lesson! Jesus is always teaching us with his stories and his life. Jesus’ enemies were all about him - throwing stones, accusing him of blasphemy, watching for any misstep so they could arrest him. Jesus was very patient with those against him. And then he left them. He went to where he was baptized and many more people came to believe. On my worst day, I haven’t had stones thrown at me, but of course, most everyone has had some bad times – days in which nothing seems to go right, situations that are most discouraging.

Can I be patient with those against me and go to a better place?

**Help me Lord, to leave the negative and find a place of love. Help me “Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.”
Psalm 18:3**

Mary Irene Stanton, PBVM Associate

Jeremiah 20:10-14; Psalm 18:2-7; John 10:31-42

**Saturday
March 19, 2016**

“Joseph ... was a righteous man.” Matthew 1:19

Unlike Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul, who have books named after them, St. Joseph is not even quoted in the Bible. I sometimes wonder what his writings would say.

Joseph's life was not easy – a lot of 'pack up and move quickly' – but he did what had to be done. He remained attentive and protective to his family.

We know Joseph as husband, father, a gentle man. We describe him as righteous, upright, honorable. Joseph's actions were louder than any words he could have written.

Today, March 19, we recall the 2000 passing of Sister Ruth Mary Cassel. Her teaching and music were elements for promoting respect for children, family life and God's presence in the world. Let my actions ignite God's presence in someone's world today.

Janet Goetz, PBVM

2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16; Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24

**Palm Sunday
March 20, 2016**

“Therefore I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.” Isaiah 50:7

As we begin Holy Week, Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem amid the crowd waving palm branches. We walk with him through this week. Isaiah uses the phrase “I have set my face like flint” - a phrase which speaks of determination. What can that mean for us as we begin this Holy Week? As Christians we are called to powerlessness, to moving to the margins and speaking for those who have no voice. Can we set our faces like flint to continue this journey? More often we are determined to accomplish a task, to succeed at some challenge. What a different call we hear this Palm Sunday.

Am I able to have the kind of resolve that is hopeful even when things seem hopeless and when I am called not to the strength admired by our culture, but to powerlessness? Spend some time today considering what you seek.

Marilyn Breen, PBVM

Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14 - 23:56

Monday
March 21, 2016

“Light, space, zest – that’s God!” Psalm 27:1 (The Message)

“Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights.” Isaiah 42:1 (Jerusalem Bible)

“Martha served. Lazarus was one of those sitting at table with them. Mary ... anointed.” John 12:1-11

Wow! These readings image well the integration of evolution and incarnation!

“Light, space, zest – that’s God!” the psalmist, inspired by the Spirit, openly proclaims. When all seems hopeless and darkness pervades, we are encouraged “Stay with God! Take heart. Don’t quit. I’ll say it again. Stay with God.”

Filled with new life, Lazarus and sisters, Martha and Mary, do just that! Inviting Jesus to a simple dinner, they physically embody the light, space and zest of God in spite of Judas Iscariot’s accusation. Gratefully returning to work with an evolved consciousness, a new vision and a deeper conviction to reside in the heart of the matter, this trio’s new mission is to intentionally “live from the center of the heart where love grows and to reach out to the world with faith, hope and trust in God’s incarnate presence” (Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New: catholicity, cosmology, consciousness*, 95)

“Here are my servants whom I uphold, my chosen ones, in whom my soul delights.” Like Lazarus, Martha and Mary, perhaps the ability to shift from reacting against the past to leaning into and presenting an emerging future may be the single most important capacity to develop within one another and throughout the world today.

Please prayerfully consider: How am I living into the fullness of the incarnation? What risks am I taking to evolve, to get involved, to lean into “christifying” the world?

Ann Jackson, PBVM

Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27:1-3, 13-14; John 12:1-11

**Tuesday
March 22, 2016**

“I tell you ... one of you will betray me... It is the one to whom I give the piece of bread.’ He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas ... At that instant, after Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus then said, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly.’ ... As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. Night had fallen.” John 13:21-30

I am reminded of a mime I experienced while on a 30 day retreat in 1994 – so moving. The next year, with six parishioners, we re-enacted the Passion. Days before our first presentation, the man playing Judas dropped out. I took the part of Judas. Each year since, during Holy Week, I re-live that experience. Love betrayed, evil entering, greed winning out, despair overcoming. “Night had fallen”.

Spend some time with Judas or one of the other apostles or characters in the Passion. What message is there for you?

Jeanine Kuhn, PBVM

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 72:1-6, 15, 17; John 13:21-33, 36-38

**Wednesday
March 23, 2016**

“The Lord has given me a well-trained tongue that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that would rouse them.” Isaiah 50:4

What does it mean to have a well-trained tongue? Obviously, a well-trained tongue would know when to speak and when to remain silent. A well-trained tongue would speak words that help rather than hurt. In the letter of James (1:19) we read, “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” That person would surely have a well-trained tongue. When I was teaching I had a poster that listed five questions to ask yourself before speaking. THINK: Is it true? Helpful? Important? Nice? Kind?

If you can answer yes to each of these, just think, you probably have a well-trained tongue, one that could speak to the weary a word that would encourage them.

What am I doing this Lent to develop a well-trained tongue?

Anne McCormick, PBVM

Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34
Matthew 26:14-25

Holy Thursday
March 24, 2016

“Do you realize what I have done for you? I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” John 13:12, 15

Jesus loved his disciples to the very end, even when they failed him. The Lord loves each one of us unconditionally. His love has power to set us free to serve others with Christ-like compassion and humility. Jesus keeps inviting his apostles and each of us by his own example to live as servants to our sisters and brothers.

When we serve one another we are “washing feet.” Sometimes it is helping serve a meal for the homeless, bringing a meal for the sick or hungry, listening to another who has experienced a loss of a loved one, babysitting for a parent in need of time and the list of opportunities goes on.

We wash feet when we encourage the depressed, are patient with the angry, spend time with the lonely. We wash feet when we encourage children to do their best, when we just sit and listen to another, when we use the gift of music to comfort the lonely and the dying.

Jesus gives us an example of real service as he touched others with loving compassion. Paul writes that through Jesus we are called to a new freedom. May we use this gift to **serve** one another in **love**.

What are ways the love of Christ manifests itself in your heart and in your actions?

Becky Searcy, PBVM Associate

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18
1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

**Good Friday
March 25, 2016**

“In the end, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus was led away, and carrying the cross by himself, went out to what is called the Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgatha). There they crucified him.” John 19:16-18

... in Hebrew *Golgatha*; in Latin *Calvary*
And I am reminded of a favorite poem by Father Gordon Gilsdorf:

I searched
God's lexicon
To fathom "Bethlehem"
And "Calvary." It simply said:
See "Love."

Spend some time in silence, wrapped in God's love. What is your understanding of God's love? How really open and receptive are you to God's love? Reflect on the manifestations of God's love in your life; can you name 20, 40, 60...?

Joan Lickteig, PBVM

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12; Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1 - 19:42

Holy Saturday
March 26, 2016

“Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised?” Luke 24:5

This gospel reading has greater significance since the death of my mom. A little over a month after Mom’s funeral, our immediate family gathered for the burial of her cremains. Part of our prayer together included sharing memories of Mom. Though we ached with lonesomeness for her, it was impossible not to experience a sense of joy and delight, as well as the encouragement to live the qualities that had been so present in her life.

“We find our deceased loved ones by entering into life in the way that was most distinctive to them. We connect ourselves to them when we pour ourselves into life as they did.”

(The Holy Longing by Ronald Rolheiser)

I imagine that is what Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James and the eleven disciples did - they poured themselves into life as Jesus had! Let’s do the same these 50 Days of Easter!

May the fire of God that burns within us shape our lives in the way that Jesus shaped his. Alleluia!

Beth Driscoll, PBVM

Genesis 1:1 – 2:2; Exodus 14:15 – 15:1; Isaiah 55:1-11
Romans 6:3-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-16, 22-23; Luke 24:1-12

**Easter Sunday
March 27, 2016**

“I give thanks to you, O Beloved, who answer our prayers and invites us to new Life. The stone which the builders rejected has become the foundation of our lives. This, O Eternal Listener, is your work; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which you have made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118: 22-23

We have seen the destruction of life in so many ways in our world, from the horrors of war to drought-ridden farmlands. For many people what was considered foundational to their lives is no longer a possibility. How do any of us find new life when we experience devastation to what we considered central to our lives? In our Christian tradition, we find the celebration of Easter gives us hope and a promise of new Life. In other words, we are energized by this feast.

“Theologians like Karl Rahner and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin tell us that the resurrection of the Christ is not merely an event. It is that of course. Yet, it is also an Energy that has been unleashed in the Universe. Now, more than ever, it is ours to lean into It, to align ourselves with It.”

– *Margaret Galiardi, OP, in Global Sisters Report:*
<http://bit.ly/1NrvH0x>

How will you align with the Energy of Easter this year? Will you make this the cornerstone of your life?

Joy Peterson, PBVM

Acts 10:34, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9



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