



Like the Seed
keeping
expectant silence
before the
mystery
of emergence
we await
the blossoming
of New Life

justice peace hope
justice peace hope
justice peace hope
hospitality
love
compassion
courage
integrity zeal
courage
integrity zeal
courage
integrity zeal

Lent 2017

Lent

Pause to reflect on life

Journey to Jerusalem

Sin.....Forgiveness

Friends.....Traitors

Sacrifice.....Self-care

Fear.....Hope

Yearnings.....Satisfaction

Alone.....Community

Turmoil.....Peace

Death.....Life

Lent

Life lived with Jesus

Death experienced with Jesus

Belief in a promise

EASTER

Charlotte McCoy, PBVM Associate

Ash Wednesday
March 1, 2017

“Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2

“Now” could be considered a holy word because it is the time we encounter the Holy, the only time. “Here” is a holy place because it is the only location where we meet the Sacred.

When God offered an introduction to Moses (Exodus 3:14), he proffered an unusual name: **I AM**. It was more than a name, however, that God shared. It was a gift. This name tells us something essential about God and our encounters with God: God is *with us* - now! God is neither a God of the past nor of the future. It is in the present tense that we can dwell with the Divine.

In the beginning of the second reading for today, St. Paul is inviting us to *mindfulness*. We would do well to spend our time/thoughts in the present, where opportunities for love and service present themselves: speaking up, reaching out, tending to, being present with. Vietnamese Buddhist monk and mystic, Thich Nhat Hanh, invites his readers and listeners to practice mindfulness. If we are washing dishes, attend to the task; if writing a letter, focus there; if talking with someone, give that person full attention. Whether taking a walk or taking the meeting's minutes, be present.

Are you ready for Lent? I hope you weren't planning to “get right at it” next week. The acceptable time is NOW. What are we waiting for?

Joan Lickteig, PBVM

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

Thursday
March 2, 2017

“I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him.” Deuteronomy 30:19-20

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses makes it very clear just what it will take for us to reach heaven. Who wouldn't choose a blessing over a curse, life over death? The responsorial psalm tells us that those who choose life are those who follow the way of the just: “Happy are they who delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on the law day and night.” This means keeping the Lord's commandments, statutes and decrees. It is easy to say, “I choose life.” The test comes in living that choice, in choosing to do good when the other choice might be easier or seemingly reap more benefits. Sometimes it is easier to follow the way of the wicked than the way of the just. Listen again to Moses: “Love the Lord, listen for his voice, cling to him.”

Dear God, during the Lenten season I ask for strength and guidance that I may make the right choice, the choice that will lead me to you. Amen.

Anne McCormick, PBVM

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

**Friday
March 3, 2017**

“Why do we and the Pharisees fast...?” Matthew 9:14

Today is a good day to stop, pause, reflect upon and to ask ourselves, “What does fasting mean to me?” We are being asked to fast from the things that control our lives. We give up food. We give up Facebook. We give up being judgmental. We give up gossip. We give up all sorts of stuff. But none of it comes even remotely close to what Jesus gave up – his life. Today we are being asked to let the controlling thing go, so that we are free to move in a new direction with Jesus.

What is the controlling thing that I need to surrender to Jesus this Lenten season?

Cheryl Demmer, PBVM

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

**Saturday
March 4, 2016**

“‘Repairer of the breach,’ they shall call you, ‘Restorer of ruined dwellings.’” Isaiah 58:12

I am sitting here writing this reflection just days after the presidential election. Our country is torn and divided. We are in need of repair and restoration. I trust that God is in the midst of those who are frightened and those who are angry. In today’s Gospel, Jesus dines with tax collectors. Does he also dine with tax avoiders? I believe that I am called to be a soothing balm wherever I encounter sickness in the world. May we all carry our lantern lights into places of darkness and despair.

I invite you to pray all 17 verses of Psalm 86 today. It is a lament for a time of distress. The psalmist desires help, comfort and protection from the Lord.

Bernie Graves, PBVM Associate

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

**First Sunday of Lent
March 5, 2017**

“The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.” Genesis 2:7

“Jesus replied, scripture has it: ‘Not on bread alone is one to live but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 2:4

**“A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your holy spirit take not from me. Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me.”
Psalm 51:17**

At first glance, today’s readings relate humankind’s fall in Genesis, our salvation through Christ’s saving act in Romans, the temptation of Jesus by Satan in Matthew and a prayer of longing and repentance (*Miserere*) in the Psalm – one story of humanity. Yet, in Genesis we also witness God’s creative breath, in the Gospel our call to receive the word of God in our hearts and lives and through the Psalm a reminder that only in God do we *really* live – another story of humanity. Fall and temptation or redemption and life through grace. According to N. Scott Momaday in his essay, *The Storyteller and His Art*, “There is only one story, after all, and it is about the pursuit of man by God ...”

Share one of your sacred stories with someone today.

Barbara Ressler, PBVM Associate

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17
Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

**Monday
March 6, 2017**

“Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.” Leviticus 19:2

**“Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart
find favor before you.” Psalm 19:15**

“...whatever you did for one of these least...” Matthew 25:40

Our Call to Be Holy

Our Lenten journey calls us to be holy
by giving ourselves “Whole-ly” to love
in thought, word and deed.

While the ultimate destiny of the goats and the sheep
may seem far away, that call to holiness is ever so near –
in what we think, in what we say, and in how we respond
to those who are the least, the lost, the last and left out.

How aware am I of those near to me who spiritually
hunger, thirst, feel estranged, imprisoned or hurting?

**Holy God, open our eyes to see you in one another.
Open our ears to hear you in the cries around us.
Open our hearts to respond in love day by day.**

Diana Blong, PBVM

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

**Tuesday
March 7, 2017**

**“If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.”
Matthew 6:14-15**

Through the years, as a mother and grandmother, I have witnessed many disagreements and arguments, someone hurting someone's feelings or causing harm to a sibling or friend. After disciplining, then taking a few moments to cool down, came the next step: the action of forgiveness. “Now hug and say you're sorry.” Wow! Sometimes that was more painful than the actual disagreement. But all in all, everyone (most of the time) came to an agreement and learned from that moment. Saying you're sorry, asking for forgiveness and receiving forgiveness are very powerful actions.

As adults we sometimes let our emotions rule the moment. We tend to hold on to our hurt feelings and the action of forgiveness never happens. Are we too proud to take the moment to cool off and then say “I am sorry, please forgive me?”

“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”
Matthew 6:8

Let us pray the Our Father. And after this prayer, reflect upon those whom we have hurt. Make a phone call, or send a note of sorrow to heal old wounds.

A hug is an expression of humbling oneself and asking for forgiveness. Share a hug with someone you love.

Darla Budden, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 55:1-11; Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19; Matthew 6:7-15

**Wednesday
March 8, 2017**

“A proclamation was promulgated throughout Nineveh by the king and his ministers. All are to put on sackcloth and call on God with all their might; and let everyone renounce his evil behavior and the wicked things that have been done. Who knows if God will not change his mind and relent, if he will not renounce his burning wrath, so that we do not perish? God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behavior. And God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.” Jonah 3:1-10

We have many problems in the world that need us to call on God in prayer so disaster isn't the result. God seems to be forgotten or not called upon for his guidance. This being Lent, maybe more penance is needed as I humble myself and listen to what God is asking this day.

God, am I willing to take time and listen for your guidance? Help me to put you first this day and listen to what you are asking of me.

Dolores Moes, PBVM

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

Thursday
March 9, 2017

“Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish, had recourse to the Lord ... ‘As a child I used to hear from the books of my forefathers that you, O Lord, always free those who are pleasing to you. Now help me, who am alone and have no one but you, O Lord, my God ... save us from the hand of our enemies; turn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness.’” Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25

Esther’s prayer in the reading today sets a new tone of trusting prayer. She prays to God, acknowledging her weaknesses and acknowledging that without God’s help there is nothing she can do. She knows that she and her people are in God’s hands. We are called to look at Esther’s prayer as a model for our own. We are encouraged to ask, search and knock as a way of acknowledging our total dependence on God. And no matter what we’re asking for, we are called to, like Esther, leave the outcome totally in our Father’s hands.

Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

I will ... give thanks to your name, because of your kindness and your truth; for you have made great above all things your name and your promise. When I called, you answered me; you built up strength within me.
Psalms 138:2-3

Deb Jasper, PBVM Associate

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

**Friday
March 10, 2017**

“With the Lord there is kindness, and with the Lord is plenteous redemption.” Psalm 130:7

We hear and read much about how the Lord loves each one of us, no matter how sinful we might be. We could interpret that word “love” as “kindness.” We pray for help and thank the Lord for an answer to our prayer. Through that answer we experience the Lord’s act of kindness as an act of love for us and a promise of better times to come.

Lord, help me to be kind as you are to all persons I meet in my daily life. Help me to love all others, even those who are a challenge for me to love. Through my acts of kindness and love I can be assured of your promise of redemption.

Dolores Zieser, PBVM

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1-4, 6-8; Matthew 5:20-26

**Saturday
March 11, 2017**

“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘You have heard it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.’” Matthew 5:44-45

As I write this we have just finished one of the most divisive elections in our history, one in which extreme words and actions came to the forefront and a high level of fear and hatred was unleashed. As you read this, the new administration will be starting to settle into office. This is a time that calls for both reconciliation and for continuing to stand, even more strongly, with the most vulnerable in our world. The rest of this Gospel calls us to be perfect as our heavenly God is perfect. That is a high bar to reach but one that we are called to try by loving all, even our enemies.

Who are my “enemies” that I need to love? How will I transform my hate into love? What will I do to continue to support and advocate for the most vulnerable?

Bren Connors, PBVM Associate and Former Member

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

**Second Sunday of Lent
March 12, 2017**

“God has saved us and has called us to a holy life, not because of any merit of ours but according to his own design - the grace held out to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” 2 Timothy 1:9

This verse is highlighted in the bible I most often use. As I prayerfully read the passage I am left with more questions than answers but I am always struck by the amazing gift I have been given. I am also reminded that if I have been given the gift so has every person.

What does a holy life look like to me? Why sacrifice if I've already been saved in Christ Jesus? Do I believe I have to merit salvation? Why? How do I answer the call to a holy life?

Charlotte McCoy, PBVM Associate

Genesis 12:1-4; Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22
2 Timothy 1:8-10; Matthew 17:1-9

**Monday
March 13, 2017**

**“Be merciful just as your heavenly Father is merciful.”
Luke 6:36**

Mercy is the message for today and always! Three short months ago we celebrated the completion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis introduced that holy year by quoting from the same scripture passage we hear today. “Be merciful just as our heavenly Father is merciful.” Stop judging, stop condemning, forgive, give and gifts will be given to you. Pope Francis holds mercy with high regard. Just four days after Pope Francis’ papal election, in a homily on March 17, 2013 speaking about mercy, he said, “I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with to condemn others. And Jesus has this powerful message for us: mercy. I think – and say it with humility – that this is the Lord’s most powerful message, mercy.”

What does being merciful mean to me? Is it the Lord’s most powerful message? To whom do I owe mercy? What does it or will it cost? What are its benefits?

Luke ends this passage with these words for us to ponder, “For the measure with which you measure will in turn be measured out to you.”

Janet Stelken, PBVM

Daniel 9:4-10; Psalm 79:8-9, 11,13; Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday
March 14, 2017

“Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.’”
Matthew 23:1-12

Some people enjoy being respected and honored as a result of telling others what to do. They also take credit for other’s accomplishments without helping them. Do not take credit for work that others have done when you have not lifted a finger to help. All who are humble in heart, will be glorified in heaven. There is one master and teacher who is mightier than anyone on earth. This person is Jesus Christ.

Jesus, teach me to be humble to those I meet and to love as you have loved.

Deb Pic-Deutmeyer, PBVM Associate

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

**Wednesday
March 15, 2017**

**“Promise me that these two sons of mine will sit at your right and left when you are king.’ ... When the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with the two brothers. ‘... Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. ... He came to serve, not to be served ...’”
Matthew 20:21, 24, 26, 28**

I sense a bit of jealousy in the disciples wanting the highest honor and the others being angry with them. Why not us too? Somehow we think that everything will be better if we are in the shoes of someone in a higher level or status. We think we will have prestige, power, privilege and more money. All of this can weigh us down. I wonder how we would think if we put ourselves in the shoes of a homeless person, a refugee, an immigrant, an abused woman, a single parent, a disabled person. What might we learn from them? They have a sense of freedom that we don't have when we are jealous in wanting more.

Jesus, you did not reprimand the disciples but told them what they need to do: serve and not be served. You stepped into the lives of those on the margins. Help us to walk in someone else's shoes that may bring us discomfort. Help us to take the path of self-giving instead of self-protection.

Joan Brincks, PBVM

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

Thursday
March 16, 2017

“Rich person ... dressed in purple and linen ... feasted splendidly everyday ... At the gate ... beggar ... covered with sores ... longed to eat scraps from rich persons’ table ... dog licks sores ... between you and us there is a fixed chasm,” Luke 16:19-21, 26

The story of the rich person and the beggar, Lazarus, is difficult for me as a North American, whose lifestyle stands in sharp contrast with those in our global community who live on much less. As this story highlights, those living in poverty, the sick and the outcast are outside “our gate.”

Where is apathy in this reality?
What blinds me to these angels in need?
What challenges within are in need of change before my heart hears the call to act with deeper compassion in closing the chasm?

Eat a small bowl of rice or a slice of bread as one of your meals today, and remember that this is all many have to eat in our global community.

Joetta Venneman, PBVM

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

**Friday
March 17, 2017**

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes.” Matthew 21:42

Jesus is our cornerstone, the center of our lives, the Alpha and the Omega. Since this is St. Patrick’s Day, our thoughts turn to Ireland. Nano Nagle founded our order to bring Christ’s love to those in need in her beloved country and later to other parts of the world. We continue her work, Christ’s work, in our own lives ... or at least we try. As we celebrate St. Patrick’s Day and “the wearing of the green” let us be thankful for our blessings and reminded of our Celtic legacy as we participate in the building of the kingdom of God.

St. Patrick, pray for us. Blessed Nano, pray for us.

Janet Leonard, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Genesis 27:3-4, 12-13, 17-28; Psalm 105:16-21
Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

**Saturday
March 18, 2017**

“Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, ‘Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.’ He said to him, ‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours.’” Luke 15:27-31

Four Haikus based on the story of the Prodigal Son

I’m the elder son
Possessing the Father’s love;
I still feel cheated.

Mad at the youngest
whose life is miserable,
yet he is much loved.

Not recognizing
because I’ve always known love,
I have everything.

God’s sense of fairness,
so different than humans,
based only on love.

How differently would my relationships with others and personal and world events look if I always tried to set my perspective through the eyes of love?

Dianne McDermott, PBVM Associate

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

Third Sunday of Lent
March 19, 2017

“‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘give me that water.’” John 4:11
“I see you are a prophet, Sir.” John 4:19

There’s much to admire about the Samaritan Woman and her conversation with Jesus. She speaks intelligently and openly. She is articulate, demonstrating knowledge of the great ancestor Jacob and his sons, the mount of worship, the coming Messiah. She is a practical woman, asking how she could give water to Jesus without a bucket, accepting Jesus’ promised gift of water so she would no longer need to come to the well in the heat of the day, becoming an immediate disciple, dashing off to share the Good News with the people of Sychar. Listening to this spirited conversation is a delight. Do you feel like cheering, “You go, girl!”

Alice Camille says the Samaritan Woman has chutzpah though she’s not Jewish. In her day she probably qualified for the “Miss Samaria” contest. Winning the attention of five husbands does suggest a strong personality or at least an outgoing one. No wonder the other women were jealous of her, as well as critical, because of her multiple husbands. No doubt she was insulted, bullied, and weary of the name-calling, tired of the criticism. No one in her right mind would choose to draw water at noon in this desert land, but it seemed better than the alternative.

Tired, hungry, weary, Jesus listens to the Samaritan woman and engages her in conversation. He talks to her but not like the other men, rather with respect, honor and understanding. He recognizes her intelligence, asks her questions and stays in the conversation. But most importantly, Jesus listens to her from the outside in, hears her in a way no one else has bothered to. It’s the way Jesus listens with intention and attention – with his eyes and his heart.

Who needs my attention and listening heart? Do I show respect, honor, and understanding to all I encounter each day? In challenging situations do I ask WWJD?

Joan Lickteig, PBVM

Exodus 17:3-7; Psalm 95:1-9; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

Joseph, the Husband of Mary
Monday, March 20, 2017

“The whole thing, then, is a matter of faith on our part and generosity on God’s.” Romans 4:16 *J.B. Phillips Translation*

Parenting, it seems to me, is always a matter of faith on the part of the parent and reliance on the generous care of God for this beloved child. Joseph was no exception to this dependence. From all we can glean about him in the scriptures he held nothing back in his love for Mary and Jesus. Picture him guiding the child Jesus in the ways of fidelity, integrity and loving service. See him patiently teaching his craft as a carpenter to Jesus. Imagine Jesus learning from watching his father interact with respect and reverence for all. All these qualities of Joseph are as critical in today’s world as they were in the time of the Holy Family.

O God, you gave Joseph the joy of joining Mary in parenting Jesus. Through his intercession, grant us the grace to nurture the life of Christ in our lives. May we learn from his example in offering hospitality and generosity toward all we encounter.

Joy Peterson, 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

**Tuesday
March 21, 2017**

“Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.” Matthew 18:27

“Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, he teaches the humble his way.” Psalm 25:8-9

If I let the feelings of hurt and anger I experience when I perceive I've been wronged go unchecked, they easily lead to responses of resentment, exclusion and cynicism or worse. Summoning the humility to let go of my righteous anger and need to be right is often difficult. I'm more likely to be open to the grace to respond like the master in the story, with merciful compassion, if I am faithful to daily times of quiet openness to God.

God of mercy, draw me into silence. Change my heart to one of humble compassion.

Carol Witry, PBVM Associate

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

Wednesday
March 22, 2017

“No other people is as wise and prudent as this great nation. And indeed what great nation is there that has its gods so near as Yahweh our God is to us whenever we call to him? And what great nation is there that has laws and customs to match this whole Law that I put before you today?” Deuteronomy 4:7-8

How proud the people of Israel are of their great traditions, the laws and customs by which they interact and live their daily lives! It is within this tradition that the psalmist today proclaims: “Yahweh, Jerusalem, Zion, praise your God.” Jesus declares that he has not come to abolish, but to complete the Law of the Prophets.

And how will our Presentation traditions be completed and transformed? How will our lives reflect the changing culture and history of our times? As Carol Zinn puts it, “If there is to be joy in religious life, it should be in embracing the mystery of what God is about to do. For those who are so worried about numbers, there’s this joy that God is in charge. It will go how God needs it to go.”

Jesus’ legacy, Nano’s legacy, Mother Vincent’s legacy, indeed our legacy are all hidden in the mystery of God, never to be lost. I do not need to know what shape, or what BEING this will become, only that the Presentation legacy will be completed, just as Jesus promises. May each moment of prayer breathe love, confidence and faithfulness.

Maura McCarthy, PBVM

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

Thursday
March 23, 2017

**“This is what I commanded my people: listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper.”
Jeremiah 7:23-24**

**“Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us acclaim the rock of our salvation. Let us come into the Lord’s presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to the Lord.”
Psalm 95:1-2**

In our readings today we are commanded to listen to the Lord’s voice. We do this by reading the scriptures. We listen to the voice of God through the Spirit, the prophets and each other. Taking a closer look at ourselves we ask: Are we listening? Are we prospering in the Lord? Are we a joyful people giving thanks for all that has been given to us?

Am I really listening when visiting with someone? How do the words of Jeremiah apply to us in 2017? How do you define prosperity?

Today send a note to someone you are thankful for.

Lynn Mary Wagner, PBVM

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

**Friday
March 24, 2017**

**“Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30**

As you take time to reflect on your day/week, consider:
How have I been loving and kind?
How have I praised God?
Do my thoughts give honor to God?
Where have I put my energy to serve God and others?

**God of love and compassion, continue to grace me with
your gifts so that I may be your heart and hands in loving
service to those who journey with me each day.**

Pamela Quade, PBVM

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

Annunciation of the Lord
Saturday
March 25, 2017

“God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will.”
Hebrews 10:7

What are my first thoughts upon waking in the morning?
“Ohhhh, my back is sore!” or “Today I’ve got to get this, this, and this done.” or “Thanks, God, for a new day!” or “Today I get to ...” Some mornings I recall a prayer I learned in second grade from Sister Michele, O.S.B.: “Good morning dear God, I offer you today, all that I think and do and say”, a child’s expression of readiness, as Jesus personified, to do God’s will. The age-old question of discerners everywhere, “What is God’s will for me?” can, at times in life, be a troubling struggle of knowing that what I am to do is God’s will for me. Or it can be as simple as being God’s loving presence to those around me, bringing recognition, care and light to their day.

If I am blessed with a new day tomorrow, I want to pray:
“Creator God, source of all and only good, what will we do together today? I’m ready!”

Colleen Vlasisavljevich,
PBVM Associate and Former Member

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 40:5-10
Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-36

Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 26, 2017

“Jesus spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on the blind man’s eyes, and said to him, ‘Go wash in the Pool of Siloam’ which means ‘sent’. So he went and washed, and came back able to see.” John 9:6-7

Today in parishes around the world adults preparing for the sacraments of initiation celebrate the second of three scrutiny rites. These special celebrations invite all gathered to pray for healing, strength, and forgiveness for the catechumens preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the upcoming Easter Vigil.

The Gospel today and this scrutiny rite invite the catechumens and all the baptized to reflect on how we experience blindness when we participate in social sin. To name a few examples, when we ignore those in our world that suffer from violence, live in poverty, are victims of trafficking, not to mention the ways we abuse our planet and its finite resources, we commit social sin.

Jesus and our Catholic Social Teaching offers us the gift of sight/understanding and the challenge of creating a just society. We are blessed with the ability to see the needs of our world and the responsibility to act accordingly.

Spend some time reflecting on how you might respond to the needs in your area. Choose one action that you can do within the next few weeks. If you aren’t able to go out and participate in a concrete action, commit to praying for the efforts of those who can.

Annette Kestel, PBVM

1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13; Psalm 23:1-6
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

**Monday
March 27, 2017**

“Behold I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” Isaiah 65:17

As a teacher, I taught many students over the years, some with great talent and abilities who were able to achieve in a short amount of time. There were other students who were shy and school was not easy for them. With a little bit of encouragement, many of these shy students didn't give up, they didn't look behind, but kept striving for what was ahead and accomplished great things. When I am met with the struggles of life, worries and concerns of this world, it might be easy to get discouraged. I need to remember to be like the students to keep looking ahead for God promises a new creation. The former things will not be remembered. I can't let my shortsightedness cloud my view of what is to come. Each day I can enjoy the peace that passes all understanding.

**Day by day, day by day
O dear Lord, three things I pray
to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly, day by day.**

Margaret Anne Kramer, PBVM

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

Tuesday
March 28, 2017

“Thus we do not fear, though earth be shaken and mountains quake to the depths of the sea, though its waters rage and foam and mountains totter at its surging. The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.” Psalm 46:3-4

All of today's scriptures offer water images. In Ezekiel, the depth of the water mentioned goes from a trickle to a river that can't be crossed except by swimming. The Gospel of John tells the story of a man who desires to be cured of his 38-year illness by being immersed in a healing pool of water when it is stirred up, but just never makes it in time to be the first one there to receive its benefits. Psalm 46 talks about waters that rage and foam; certainly declaring the opposite of a calm and clear situation.

Somedays, we get ourselves into situations that take us in “over our heads” and we have to swim like crazy to get to dry land. Or we might be struggling with something that has had a long-time hold on our ability to be able to “walk away” from what is keeping us “down” preventing us from standing upright and moving on in a healthy and holy way. Whatever “water issues” we have, the promise that God is with us reminds us though things may seem out of control, God is always in control. Jesus is the lifeguard when we get in over our heads. If we allow him to bring us to the safety of the shore, he will help us to see the fruitful abundance he offers. He can help us to get off our backs and stand with him; to be cured from whatever keeps us from living our lives in an upright way, so that someday we might have eternal life.

Creator God, help us to realize that no matter how “rough” the waters of our life may be at times, you are the one who offers an outstretched hand to save us and bring calm to the storms that arise in our lives. You are our stronghold, the God of Jacob; the God of each of us. During this Lenten season, let us remember the One who brings us to the life-giving waters of salvation.

Karen Bonfig, PBVM Associate

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

**Wednesday
March 29, 2017**

“For the Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted ... Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” Isaiah 49:13, 15

God’s love and mercy are never ending and are offered to us here and now. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make God love us less. God loves us not for what we do, but for who we are. God loves us more than even a mother loves her child and promises that love will deepen, even beyond our death.

Take time over the next days to sit in expectant silence and allow God’s love and mercy to wash over you. Be restored, be freed, be transformed by God’s loving presence.

Cindy Pfiffner, PBVM Associate

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

Thursday
March 30, 2017

“And Yahweh said to Moses: I see that these people are a stiff-necked people. Now just leave me that my anger may blaze against them.” Exodus 32:9-10

The adjective “stiff-necked” brings to mind the image of someone who is not flexible, who is not able to change their perspective or to widen the lens of their focus to be able to incorporate a broader dimension. If this description was given to the chosen people of the Old Testament, how much more today we, as individuals, can be described as “stiff-necked” in our attitudes, opinions, and judgments.

During this Lenten season, this time of conversion, what is one area of my life where I might need to broaden my horizons?

Jesus, you were always keenly aware of the needs of others, and continually opened the eyes of your followers to the broader picture. Enable me to focus my attention on what really matters, to give testimony to others that I am indeed welcoming to new people and new ideas.

Paula Schwendinger, PBVM

Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 106:19-23; John 5:31-47

Friday
March 31, 2017

“When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Psalm 34:17-19

When I read the first reading and the gospel for today, I recognized that there were so many similarities between the Lord and Nano Nagle in their missions in life, particularly the need to be secretive and fear of the people who wanted to destroy the work they were doing for God. And they both knew their hour had not yet come. They had so much work to be done.

As I write this my brother Dale is drawing near to his hour. I have been privileged to share in his epiphanies about God, faith, life, love, family and death. He has shared with me that he is ready for peace; God is with him and loves him. And he has shared with me his love for me. Peace to you little brother, until we meet again in God’s kingdom.

Are we open to being verbal and visible in our work in God’s name? Are you open to God’s will, love, and his promise to be delivered of your afflictions as we approach the most holy week in the Church year as Christ is? Are you ready for your hour that will come like a thief in the night?

Marlene Von Fumetti, PBVM Associate

Wisdom 2:1, 12-22; Psalm 34:17-20, 23; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

**Saturday
April 1, 2017**

**“‘No man ever spoke like that before,’ the guards replied.”
John 7:46**

The manner in which Jesus spoke had so much power because it was so simple and beautiful. Jesus did not need bodily strength; he used the power of his words. Jesus' words had the ability to penetrate the most armed defense. When we encounter someone perceived as powerful, we expect to hear a loud voice with strong language. But Jesus presents a manner little expected. We are therefore invited to listen to his words, sit at his feet and learn heavenly wisdom. God's response is to defend and deliver us when in the midst of danger.

As we spend time in meditation, let us consider two questions: How do we emulate the eloquence of Jesus? How might we speak God's truth and disarm those intent on questioning God's presence in the world?

Rita Cameron, PBVM

Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7:2-3, 9-10, 11-12; John 7:40-53

**Fifth Sunday of Lent
April 2, 2017**

“ ... I will settle you upon your land” Ezekiel 37:14

While acclimating to a year in Ballygriffin, Ireland, I was frequently asked, “Are you finding your feet?” meaning, “Are you getting used to being here? Are you getting used to a new place?” This phrase came to mind as I read the wisdom in Ezekiel, “I will settle you upon your land.”

And just where is the land that I long to settle in today? Where do I want to find my feet? Perhaps it is the land of Psalm 130, the land of mercy and redemption, the county of forgiveness and kindness, the city of trust. During this Lent-land time, may we find our spirit settling into the landscape of Jesus where darkness gives way to light and we dwell in Jesus who is our Resurrection and our Life.

May this Lenten journey deepen our spirit of faithfulness and joy in Jesus’ promise of resurrection and life for today and for all eternity. Amen.

Jennifer Rausch, PBVM

Ezekiel 37:12-14; Psalm 130:1-8
Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45

**Monday
April 3, 2017**

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit. He guides me along the right path for the sake of his name. Even when I walk through a dark valley I fear no harm for he is at my side; his rod and staff give me courage.” Psalm 23:1-4

As we journey through this Lenten session, this reading is a promise of hope and joy. Even in our darkest valleys, our Lord and savior is by our side, to guide us and to give us strength and courage. Pope John Paul II said, “Do not abandon yourself to despair. We are an Easter people and halluluiah is our song.”

Let a morning meditation on Psalm 23 take you to that grassy meadow beside the tranquil stream and let your spirit be restored. Reach out and take the shepherd’s hand so he can lead you through your day, whatever that day may bring. May the Lord’s peace be with you.

Mary Lou Mauss, PBVM Associate

Daniel 13:41-62; Psalm 23:1-6; John 8:1-11

Tuesday
April 4, 2017

“O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.”
Psalm 102:2

“When you lift up the Son of Man you will come to realize I
AM...” John 8:27

Taking these three readings as a whole, a person can sense the spirit of complaint and negativity from God’s people AND see God’s patient response. The response comes from God’s goodness, but the people of God also show the effects of grace when they seek God’s help in prayer, “O Lord, hear my prayer and let my cry come to you.” Psalm 102:2

We realize how easy it is in our lives to acquire the habit of complaining. This Lent may we seek God’s help and CHOOSE to be more positive, to see each day’s blessings.

God, may we “look up” each day to the gift of
salvation you offer to us as you did to the people of old.

Louann Doering, PBVM

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

**Wednesday
April 5, 2017**

“The three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were brought before the king who proclaimed, if you do not worship the golden statue I have erected, you must be thrown into the fiery furnace.” Daniel 3:14

This reminds me of a powerful homily I heard recounting how a gunman, who had already killed several students in a school, held a pistol to the head of a young girl and asked her, “Do you believe in God?” Without hesitation, she said clearly, “Yes!” The next question was not quite so clear to her. “Why?”, demanded the gunman. With a little pause, the girl answered, “Because my Mother and Father taught me to believe.” Later when the girl was recovering from a lesser injury, she remarked that she wished she could have given a better answer. To this a young deacon in her church, consoled her when he said this was the most appropriate and true answer. We all receive our faith from someone else. It is belief handed down.

What would I have said? I don't know in that tense moment. But I do know that without belief, I am nothing. Yes, most of us have known belief all our lives. We ask God to strengthen our belief. We give thanks for our belief and for all those who have taught us to believe.

Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, PBVM Associate

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

Thursday
April 6, 2017

“Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.” John 8: 58

My husband had a very bad cough. After some of his terrible episodes, he would say, “I’m dying.” After several times of hearing this, I said, “Please don’t say that. I don’t want to hear it.” He stopped saying it and he stopped telling me much about his suffering.

The Jews did not want to listen to the important message that Jesus was trying to tell them in today’s Gospel. Later in Genesis, the brothers did not want to listen to Joseph when he was trying to tell them about his dream where their sheaves were around his sheave. How many times do I not want to listen when God is speaking to me through the world and others?

As Psalm 105:4 says today: “Rely on the mighty Lord, constantly seek his face.” Constantly means seeking his face in good times and bad. Listen, do not turn away.

Help me Lord, to listen to your messages today, to accept what I hear and see and not to quiet the uncomfortable sounds, but to be your servant and try to understand.

Mary Irene Stanton, PBVM Associate

Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; John: 8:51-59

**Friday
April 7, 2017**

“I have told you, but you do not believe ... The Father and I are one.’ The Jews fetched stones to stone him ... but he eluded them.” John 10:25, 30, 31, 39

Imagine Jesus walking up and down in our courtyard cloister walk. Then imagine the Jews gathering around him pressing him to say he was the messiah, the son of God. Jesus listened but he knew what they were setting up. He had set his sights on the goal and wasn't about to be drawn off course. Jesus said to them, “I have told you, but you do not believe ... The Father and I are one.’ The Jews fetched stones to stone him ... but he eluded them.”

Recall a time when you made a decision and others questioned you as to why and how you came to that conclusion. What gave you the courage to trust in the Spirit guiding you in this prayerful decision and move on with it? Take some moments to give thanks.

Jeanine Kuhn, PBVM

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18:2-7; John 10:31-42

**Saturday
April 8, 2017**

**“So from that time on the Jewish leaders began plotting Jesus’ death. Jesus now stopped his public ministry and left Jerusalem; he went to the edge of the desert, to the village of Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples.”
John 11:53-54**

We are on the threshold of Holy Week. Today’s Gospel sets the stage for the coming events. The end for Jesus is coming close so he goes into hiding until the time is ready. Jesus goes to Ephraim, a remote desert area where he is relatively safe. Little do the Jewish people know that Jesus will be the central character of the upcoming Passover making it the most famous Passover in history.

As I prepare for the great finale of my Lenten journey, in what way(s) do I plan to enter into and participate in the full meaning of the Holy Week experience/events?

Janice Hancock, PBVM

Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10, 11-12, 13
John 11:45-57

**Palm Sunday
April 9, 2017**

“The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road.” Matthew 21:8

Palm branches from the trees represented “liberation” to the very large crowd. Today, traditional “Palm Sunday”, let’s reflect on liberation. Jesus is a liberator in many ways. As some of the wealthiest people in the history of humanity, we too need liberation, as did the crowd in the Gospel.

We’re attached to our money and possessions – afraid of losing or concerned with getting more. We think we deserve the things our money can purchase. We sometimes escape into the pleasure of shopping and purchasing, blind to the global plight of the poor. We share our goods and our attention with family and friends, overlooking the many brothers and sisters we’ve never met. We confuse our wants with our needs.

Our liberation can come when we look for Jesus the liberator in the lives of those made poor by systemic realities. “See the face of Jesus in the most poor and vulnerable and reach out in love, and we will begin to change the world,” preached Bishop Tom Gumbleton.

Today, as we place our palm prominently in our living space, we ask for the grace of liberation.

Make materially poor people a real part of daily life. Their presence counteracts unhealthy attachments to material things. Consider how you could do or symbolize this in your context or circumstances.

Billie Greenwood, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66

Monday
April 10, 2017

“You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” John 12:8

Can you imagine what the people sitting at that table thought when they heard Jesus say this? Imagine all those people who loved Jesus having a meal together – all those people who were already confused about what was going on. Then they hear Jesus talk about leaving them. What?

I know what my response would have been if I'd been sitting there. “Jesus, you can't leave. I gave up so much to follow you. You have to stay. I need you.” How different would my response be today? I still can't do it alone! But I don't have to. Nor do you! Jesus is with me, with you.

This is Holy Week, the week we are reminded how Jesus paid the price for each of us by dying and rising. This is a good time to reflect on Jesus' continuing presence with us in the Eucharist. Maybe even receive Jesus in the Eucharist on a day other than Sunday ... to truly become one with Jesus, not only in our hearts and our souls, but in our bodies as well.

Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Maureen Utter, PBVM Associate

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

**Tuesday
April 11, 2017**

“Reclining at table with his disciples, Jesus was deeply troubled and testified, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.’ The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant.” John 13:21-22

Have we betrayed Jesus? Have we ignored the needs of those around us? If we have broken bread with Jesus in the Eucharist, we should then show respect to those around us by treating them with kindness and love.

Let us pray that we will avoid betraying Jesus by doing good and caring for all those around us.

Barb Klein, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71:1-6, 15, 17; John 13:21-33, 36-38

**Wednesday
April 12, 2016**

“... the disciples came up to Jesus and said, ‘Where do you wish us to prepare the Passover supper for you?’ He said, ‘Go into the city and tell a certain man that the teacher says ... in your house, I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.’” Matthew 26:17-18

Why would the Passover meal have been so important to Jesus and his disciples? First of all, it is a celebration, and the last one that Jesus will celebrate with the disciples. Jesus knows that the end time for him is near. He will not be alone with them again until after the Resurrection. This must have been a bittersweet time for Jesus. Remember these men were his hand-picked disciples, his best friends, those who would carry on his teachings when he was gone. He knew his betrayer and ultimately that they would all desert him in his time of need. Jesus would have much to forgive his disciples for and he does it readily when they repent, fulfilling his teaching during his life of love and forgiveness.

Can we do the same when faced with betrayal of any kind from family/friends?

Oh my Jesus, give me the grace to be true to your teachings of forgiveness to others, no matter what the circumstances.

Yvonne Kisch, PBVM Associate

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

Holy Thursday
April 13, 2017

**“If I washed your feet – I who am Teacher and Lord – then you must wash each other’s feet. What I just did was give you an example: as I have done, so you must do.”
John 13:14-15**

At the time of Jesus, foot washing was seen as a mark of hospitality, but also a menial task, something an inferior would do for a superior.

Sandra Schneiders, IHM, a New Testament scholar, suggests another possible meaning. She believes that in John’s Gospel the Foot Washing is more about the mutual service of friendship, a mutual sharing of gifts that in no way implies any sort of domination. The message is not so much that the master has become the slave, but that all are on the *same level*. After Jesus has washed the disciples’ feet, he challenges them to do the same for each other and to see that all are equal friends in the kingdom, nobody is above or below in any way. (*Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, James Martin, SJ, pp 347-348)

We, too, are challenged by Jesus to see and treat every person as equal. Whose feet will I wash today? Who will I allow to wash my feet?

Julia Wingert, PBVM

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

**Good Friday
April 14, 2016**

**“It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than the people.”
John 18:14**

Again we are confronted with humanity's inhumanity. Again we are confronted with projecting the blame onto another instead of accepting responsibility. Each year we hear it on Good Friday. Jesus was horribly tortured and each day people are inhumanly tortured in prisons, in clandestine interrogation rooms and in their own homes by family. Religious Jewish leaders thought it would end their problems if they blamed an itinerant preacher and got rid of him. Each day people are named the problem be it blacks, Germans, immigrants, Muslims, conservatives, liberals, John Doe, Jane Doe, etc. Our job is not to change the world or someone else. Our calling is to change ourselves, so that the world has an example as Jesus was an example.

What do I need to do to be the change I want to see?

Rita Menart, 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 April 15, 2017

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and all things therein ...” Genesis 1:1-2

I didn't have the benefit of a Catholic education growing up, outside of the home anyway. So, as I aged and was around other proclaimed Christians there were many times I found myself in very precarious situations trying to defend that as a Catholic I AM a Christian. I've even had to defend that the Pope is not the "Anti-Christ" and that we don't pray TO the Pope. The many times I have been confronted with the "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior" question and ensuing debate, I have learned to find the correct response, strength, and a connectedness with all Christians through Genesis 1:1-2. The more others try to promote their beliefs and/or practices as better or above another's, the more I present this to them: "How does the Bible you're quoting start? Literally what's the first line or so of the 'greatest book ever written?'" The response, of course, is Genesis 1:1-2 to which it is very easy to point out that God created ALL things in heaven and earth. The creator didn't just create Christians, or just Baptists, or just Catholics! The Creator God created us ALL and then gifts each of us with our own unique understanding of the Creator's love and presence if we are open to it. For Catholics through the Holy Spirit, for other's through Mother Earth, Karma, or astrology etc. I may not be able to go "toe to toe" in a scripture quoting battle, but I can, and do, find strength in the bible and in the Holy Spirit.

Tonight go to the LONG service and experience each step of it as if you are that RCIA candidate. Renew your love for the magic, the mystery, and the majesty that is our Catholic faith, the faith we are called to share through love and open hearts and minds with ALL those God has created.

Judi A. Moritz, PBVM Associate

Genesis 1:1-2; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Isaiah 55:1-11
Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10

**Easter Sunday
April 16, 2017**

“Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb.”

John 20:1

In predawn darkness, Mary Magdalene, heartsick and sleep deprived, faced another tragedy: the body of Jesus was missing. It was only later that she recognized the Risen One when he called her by name. As a faithful disciple, she showed us how to navigate threadbare moments and that the paschal journey is indeed a pilgrimage of darkness to light and death to new life.

During this Easter season thank someone who has helped you during a threadbare experience and be alert for ways you may be able to support others.

Corine Murray, PBVM

Acts 10:34, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
I Colossians 3:1-4 or I Colossians 5:6-8; John 20:1-9



SISTERS
OF THE PRESENTATION
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

2360 CARTER ROAD
DUBUQUE, IA 52001

*Sent with blessings from the
Presentation Associates and Sisters, Dubuque, Iowa*