

# Lent 2009

## Midwest District Reflections



*Reflections based on each day's readings  
from Lasallians all over the Midwest District*

Lent 2009

Dear Lasallians of the Midwest District,

Since the beginning of our district in 1995, each Brother and community member has received a Lenten Reflection booklet. We are continuing that tradition, but in a way that makes this resource more accessible and available to everyone in our many communities and ministries.

Each of the next 40 pages includes the readings of the day for the Lenten season (excluding Sundays, which are not counted in the 40 days of Lent). Each reflection is written by a representative of the various ministries and communities of our district. They are written by teachers, students, administrators, board members, Lasallian Volunteers, and Brothers. This makes this Lenten reflection booklet both unique and rich in a way that a book by a single author could not.

May your Lenten journey be one of many blessings and may the following pages spark some insights into the wonderful, challenging Scriptures of Lent.

*Brother Frank Carr, Visitor*

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Dear Lasallians,

First of all, a huge THANKS to all who participated in this project—the writers, of course, but also all of you who helped choose writers as well as encouraging (perhaps, prodding at times) them to complete their reflection.

The result is a special project that will help familiarize us with the varied ministries and communities of our district and also appreciate the talent and faith that so enrich our Lasallian mission.

Feel free to download this or use it on-line. Don't hesitate to make it available to anyone who might benefit from it.

May each day of Lent bring you closer to Jesus, who lives in our hearts.

*Brother Larry Schatz, Auxiliary Visitor*

## February 25, ASH WEDNESDAY

*Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6,16-18*

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Conversion is not a solo event. All are invited: friend, neighbor, relative, stranger, migrant, homeless, enemy, undocumented, death-row inmate, Iraqi, Palestinian....God's blanket of invitation, table of welcome, excludes no one.

No one will point to us as God-less – our belief and values are demonstrated in our attitudes, dispositions, words, actions, relationships, stances of mercy, hospitality, justice – in God we live, move, exist.

Interrupt everything, come together as community; listen, with keen ears, observe with bright eyes; feel with rent hearts; enliven your memory into hopeful expectation.

With the urgency of now, conversion is in the forever present – today- the now that is always, everywhere potential and possibility.

Incarnation roots God irrevocably in our very existence, an ultimate but continually active, evolving fulfillment of salvific prophecy and covenant.

God among us is for reconciliation, healing brokenness, bonding separation. Our profession to discipleship implicates us as essential participants, models and facilitators of holy wholeness within the multiple communities of which we are members, in the ministries where we are engaged.

We are invited, challenged to the alms of an equitable distribution of our abundance, dispelling the myth of scarcity; the prayer of an always attitude and activity in the presence of God; the fasting from individualism, privilege, arrogance, control, violence, injustice.

The smudge on our forehead fades in hours; Lent's practiced 40 days, lifted up for heightened awareness, in review is a quick passage. But Lent is forever, always in season; what endures of the symbol, the intentional mode of a season, is the gradual softening, stretching, molding, grounding, focusing, exciting us into a way of, stance for life.

Our journey is the destination.

*Brother Louis Rodemann, Director  
Holy Family Catholic Worker, Kansas City, MO*

**Thursday, February 26**

*Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9,22-25*

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In today's readings, we are presented with a series of opposites and paradoxes. Moses contrasts what is required for life with what leads to death. Luke provides us an apparent contradiction (paradox) regarding life and death. Real life often consists of recognizing and resolving this tension between opposites and recognizing the underlying truth of paradoxes. The first of today's readings actually tells us how to resolve the apparent contradiction of the second reading. Moses clearly tells us that to live, to be blessed, we must obey the commandments of God. As straight-forward as that may seem, the first statement in the second reading reminds us that God's commandments may conflict with the conventional wisdom and accepted way of doing things. That's where the hard part begins.

Are we willing to find ourselves rejected by those who have an interest in seeing that the cultural norms stay in place? Are we willing to do what is "right" by God's standards, not human standards? Do we allow ourselves to be "led astray and adore and serve other gods"? Who and what are our gods? Popularity? Money? A good time? Success? Looks? Athletic skill? The list is endless. Any time one of these things, or any other person, project, or purpose becomes more important than my relationship with God, I have created an idol, a false god. That's the standard God's commandment sets for us. That's what it means to lose one's life in order to live. God's commandment often conflicts with the standards of the world and it is in those opposites that we choose life or death.

Lent gives us time to ask these hard questions, to be honest with ourselves and with God, and to make the choice that will give us life.

*Marianne Stich, Vice President for Mission  
Bishop Kelley High School, Tulsa, OK*

## Friday, February 27

*Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:14-15*

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Today's readings call to mind the practice of fasting, inviting us to consider our intentions and actions, our manner of fasting, the truth of our worship. God challenges the house of Jacob, denouncing their chosen fast as merely a day to humble oneself and to serve one's own interest. God declares this false worship and calls for a fast of a different kind...a fast accompanied by acts of justice.

What, then, will our fast look like, as we continue in this Lenten season?

Ministering at the Darst Center has gifted me with the opportunity to come to know and walk with people in suffering, in a circumstance of injustice, in a struggle against oppression and I am blessed to have learned from them the significance of choice. Each Lenten season, I am afforded the opportunity to once again *choose* my sacrifice...to deliberately select my "fast." In the luxury of this choice, I have learned to be grateful, and ever mindful of all whose suffering is not of their choosing; whose life, instead, is their fast.

So I am confronted with the question: Do I choose my fast for a season, lifting my voice like a lone trumpet on my own behalf or do I live my fast for a lifetime, joining my voice with the voice and the suffering of others? For when the voice of true worship is heard, "then your light shall break forth like the dawn. Then you shall call and God will answer. You shall cry for help, and God will say, Here I am."

*Mindy Rueden, Executive Director  
Brother David Darst Center, Chicago*

## Saturday, February 28

*Isaiah 58:9b—14; Luke 5:27-32*

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Let's be honest, we all wander... We all get lost

I think it happens slowly, imperceptibly. One day our vision is very clear, we are "in the zone". Doing the right thing is automatic. And it's like that for a while. But slowly, as we experience success, we begin to relax and to wander until without realizing it we are lost.

We stop reflecting and feeling our need for guidance, our need for God. We NEED something to wake us up again. We need to fail. We need to be knocked off our "high horse".

For teachers it is often an encounter with a student or a class that just doesn't respond to what we have always done. We think, "I've been teaching for years and this has never happened before. There is something wrong with this class or this student. If only this student or this class was gone, my life would be perfect. I could do what I always do."

But the scripture and De La Salle see it differently. This struggle is a call back to faithfulness.

The desert, the exile, the ruin is sometimes necessary to call us back. The difficult student or class is the encounter with Jesus which says, "Follow me." (Lk 5:27) Leave behind your old ways ... the things that worked in the past. Follow me ... Change ... Grow!

For De La Salle, it is the specific students in front of us at this moment who are calling us to salvation. Embrace the challenge! "Then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on parched land. God will renew your strength." (Is 58:11)

*Brother Mark Snodgrass, Principal  
DeLaSalle at Blessed Sacrament, Memphis, TN*

## Monday, March 2

*Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46*

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The reading for today from Matthew is *The Last Judgment*. Jesus is sitting in heaven with the nations spread before him separating them into two groups- the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. The sheep are those that cared for him and will receive a place in heaven while the goats were neglectful and will be eternally condemned.

I first read this passage and thought how scary Judgment Day will be for all of us, including myself. I feared being sent with the goats and losing the inheritance of the kingdom. I wondered if I am a sheep of the flock and, if not, how I can become one. Then I asked how does Jesus say that we can be placed with the sheep? The answer is by being a friend and willing rather than closed and selfish. By serving those around us we are actually serving Jesus. But not only are we serving Jesus, we are also opening ourselves up and proclaiming, "I am prepared to receive God's grace!"

Then I recollected if I have been a friend to Jesus recently. One action of mine stood out from the rest. On Thanksgiving evening my sister and I were driving downtown after departing from our family dinner and I noticed a homeless man lying on the cold sidewalk. I immediately thought without hesitation to give him our leftovers from the meal. I got out of the car and walked up to him and handed him the leftovers, which he took appreciatively. I know that this action was aiding Jesus and I am open to God's grace because I gave of myself without any expectation. I am proud to say I am becoming a sheep, are you?

*Joe Bova, Senior  
LaSalle High School, Cincinnati, OH*

**Tuesday, March 3**

*Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15*

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In today's reading we find a two-fold meaning—that all things have purpose under God, and that words have power when used correctly. Just as God sends the rain and snow with a purpose, so does he send his Word. This word is both Christ and the words that He speaks. Jesus gives us a formula for prayer, and warns us against useless and futile “babble” meant only for show and with no love towards God.

How do these two ideas fit together? The image in Isaiah gives us a picture of words as fulfilling. The water and snow give life and allow the budding of plants, giving food and rich soil. Jesus likewise gives us fulfillment—He gives us new life through his death and resurrection, and sustains us with his body and blood. When praying we hear that God “gives us our daily bread”, “forgives our trespasses”, and “delivers us from evil”. We thus see that it is not words in general that have power, but words that come from the authority of God. One way in which this power can be manifested is in forgiveness. God gives us the power to say to one another, “I forgive you”. These words are fulfilling to us, and their purpose is to recreate a bond of love.

In this time of Lent forgiveness is imperative. How can we not forgive a transgressor when Christ forgave through His most painful death and in spite of innocence? We are the biggest transgressors. In the act of forgiving we are released from the chains that keep us from our brothers and sisters and we bring ourselves closer in unity with Christ on the cross. It is in dying this way, free from those that hurt us, that we are able to rise again with Christ at Easter.

*Ryan Langr, Senior*

*Saint Mary's University, Winona, MN*

**Wednesday, March 4**

*Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32*

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High school students are notoriously bad at seeing signs... **KEEP YOUR PURSES ON THE FLOOR! NO FOOD OR DRINK IN THE CLASSROOMS! CHAPTER TEST ON THURSDAY!**

"Huh? What? When did you tell us that?!"

You could write it in big, bold, neon letters and duct tape it on their locker and still it would go unnoticed. Most of us are not much better when it comes to noticing the signs that God places before us each day. In big and small ways, God is constantly calling us to conversion and growth – no less than God called the Ninevites or Jesus called the people of his day.

That annoying sophomore who needs help with an assignment... that crabby teacher who tests everybody's patience on a daily basis... that email "invitation" from the principal to meet with her before school. When we "remember that we are in the holy presence of God," do we believe it? Do we believe that God's holy presence -- the presence of others in our lives -- is a sign that calls us to share in God's holiness?

Today's Scripture readings are quite clear: to what lengths are we willing to go to hear the wisdom of God? And when we hear God's voice... will we listen?

*Eric Westra, Teacher*

*Roncalli Catholic High School Omaha, NE*

## Thursday, March 5

*Esther C:12,14-16,23-25; Matthew 7:7-12*

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I don't like God's sense of humor. I gladly volunteered to write this reflection for LaSalle Manor, then I got the readings. God is not funny. For the last six months I have struggled with the passage from Matthew, "Ask and it will be given to you...For everyone who asks, receives" Oh really? How I would love to be able to put God on trial over that verse alone.

What has been my struggle? Why do I think that God is a liar? My husband and I were expecting our first child last September, a little girl named Keenan Marygrace. I know first hand what Queen Esther means by "mortal anguish." With only three weeks left until her due date, Keenan died in my womb. She was stillborn on August 25, 2008. My husband and I prayed for Keenan's health every day of my pregnancy. We asked and what did we get? My husband and I walked our daughter down the aisle at church, but she was in a white coffin, not a white dress. I have a case, don't I?

There is one small word from the passage of Esther that reminds me that God did not fail. *Recourse* - help in a difficult situation. Stillbirth definitely ranks as a difficult situation. We had more than help; we were blessed with angelic beings masquerading as nurses and the community at LaSalle Manor did everything they could to support us.

The Church is wise in pairing these readings together. I am sure I am not the only person this Lent wishing to put God on trial. Yet, Esther reminds me that even if my prayers aren't answered the way I think they should be answered, God is there supporting me in my pain. How has God disguised your angels?

*Deirdre Darr, Retreat Director  
LaSalle Manor Retreat Center, Plano, IL*

## Friday, March 6

*Ezekiel 18:21-18; Matthew 5:20-26*

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Both readings deal with the difficulty of distinguishing right from wrong and the development of consciousness that comes from seeing ourselves and the world more deeply.

A student of mine had been struggling with depression, sleeping constantly in class, alienating his parents and classmates. We tried hard to get assignments completed, but he could not concentrate and had no energy. His thinking was convergent, he felt trapped, it was always “me-me-me”. I finally said, it is not all about you”, but the more I said it the more he insisted that it was!

“I see no way out of this hole, it is so dark, I feel like I am dying inside”

I suggested looking in the opposite direction for light and life- “you keep looking inward, try looking outward- is there anything that brightens your day? Makes you feel alive, that gives you joy, beauty or gratitude”?

He realized how appreciated he was at the daycare center where he did his service. “The kids just light up when I get there, they just take me to a better place! I feel the same way around my two new nephews, they make me feel like I am part of something bigger!

It is a powerful moment to witness this level of insight, Richard Rohr writes...

*“The forgiveness inherent in our faith teaches that all of us are part of something much larger than the good or bad stories we tell about ourselves. Please don’t get caught in just my stories, my hurts, my agenda. It is too small. It is not the whole you, not the Great You....It is not where life is really going to happen. Strangely, your life is not about “you”. It is part of a much larger stream called God”.*

*Everything Belongs*

*Paul Kraus, Lasallian Animator*

*Christian Brothers College High School, St. Louis, MO*

## Saturday, March 7

*Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48*

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Reading this passage I realized that it, in essence, effectively summed up what our faith journey is expected to be. Taken in context, it was a description of action and consequence for the Israelites in their time. It stated that they were to follow God's laws with all their heart and with all their soul, to "walk in His ways...keep His decrees, commands, and laws, and...obey Him." And, as a result, He would fulfill His promise to them, His Chosen People, granting them all He has offered as reward.

Even out of context this covenant is still, some few thousands of years later, acting as a guideline to how we each should act in order to live in the glory of God. Though we do not have the hundreds of laws that the Israelites originally were required to follow, we still adhere to basic moral and Christian duties that God asks of us. We are expected to love one another, we are expected to help those in their time of need, to give selflessly, and to live according to God's will. We must do this with all our hearts and with all our souls. These are our laws. These are our stepping stones toward becoming "a people holy to the Lord our God".  
*God-*

*Thank you for the countless blessings you have bestowed upon me.*

*Help me follow Your will, Your commandments, with all my heart, all my soul, and all my strength.*

*Enlighten me to follow Your way.*

*Open my ears so I can hear Your voice.*

*Open my eyes so I can see Your path for me.*

*And open my arms so I can embrace Your people and Your world.*

*Guide me and teach me so I may become someone with whom You are well pleased.*

*Amen.*

*Felix Aguilar and Vanessa Voller, 9th Grade  
DeLaSalle High School, Minneapolis, MN*

## **Monday, March 9**

*Daniel 9:4-10; Luke 6:36-38*

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Today's Scripture readings speak of listening to the prophets and giving of ourselves. These actions are connected with the consequences of not giving and the subsequent need for forgiveness.

In our Lasallian mission we encounter students and colleagues, community members and total strangers, who desperately need the witness of giving and forgiving. Because these are often hidden needs, we need to express them to each person we meet. We might be surprised with who is in need of these gifts.

As Lasallians we will have many opportunities today to give to others and to be a prophetic witness. We are engaged in service to the young either by prayer or action or both. What is potentially more prophetic?

We also witness daily, by our self-giving, to the wondrous joy of losing ourselves in the gift of self. How difficult to achieve, how beautiful to experience! Often we become aware of these experiences only in hindsight. This evening, reflect on whether or not this was your experience today.

As our Lenten journey continues, let us follow the wisdom of Daniel and Jesus by being attentive to the prophetic voices of giving and forgiving!

*Brother Michael Kadow, Lasallian Animator  
San Juan Diego Middle School, Racine, WI*

**Tuesday, March 10**

*Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Matthew 23:1-12*

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We are all called to holiness. All of us are called to live a life of humility, obedience and service. We are called to turn away from evil and turn toward God and His goodness. Today's readings give us some insight as to how we are to behave, what we are to avoid, who we are to be.

Matthew reminds us that it is difficult to practice what we preach. Grace allows us to recognize goodness and truth, but our weaknesses lead us away from putting into practice the difficult virtues of our hearts. How often we know what is good and true and holy, and yet weakness keeps us from acting upon this knowledge. Christ tells us that we must learn to be good, learn to do good. We are painfully aware of the difficulty in cultivating this as a habit.

We must not lose heart when we fail at times to live up to the challenge of holiness. We are assured that God continues to give us everything that we need to become holy. He continually rains down His graces upon us, inviting us to embrace the goodness that is offered. Our hearts must be humble and obedient and open to the call of service.

Lent is the time to rededicate ourselves to humble service in Christ. Matthew's words should be our guide, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted." If we follow this advice, if we humble ourselves, we shall become exalted in holiness.

*Jacki Crider, Teacher*

*Helias High School, Jefferson City, MO*

**Wednesday, March 11**

*Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28*

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What greater love is there (besides God's love for us) than the love of a mother for her children? In Matthew's gospel, the mother of the sons of Zebedee had a ridiculous request of Jesus because she wanted what was best for her children, and she wanted her sons to be in a position of power.

I think parenthood is the ultimate form of service. Parents give all that they have to make sure that their children have what they need and often want. My parents have done so much for me and have given me so many opportunities. They have supported and encouraged me my entire life. They have both worked very hard to make sure that I was able to receive a good education, and I have attended Catholic schools since pre-school. The most significant service that my mom has done for me recently was when she took time off of work to attend an interview at the Illinois College of Optometry with me. Her presence there made me more confident and comfortable, and it showed because I was accepted! I know that if I did not have the love and support of my parents, I would not have been able to come as far as I have today.

People are often more concerned with their own lives than doing service. If we just look around, though, people are doing service all over whether it is holding the door open for someone, serving food at a soup kitchen, or even being a parent. People tell me sometimes that I act like my mother, and I have come to realize that it's not such a bad thing to be like your parent!

*Lori Navarro, Senior*

*Lewis University, Romeoville, IL*

**Thursday, March 12**

*Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31*

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For a Nativity-Miguel school, like De La Salle Blackfeet, the words of Jeremiah are part of our daily reality. When St. La Salle gave away his earthly possessions and put himself and his Brothers into the hands of Providence, he set an example for us to follow in our educational endeavors today.

Is there really any other attitude to have? Are we ever in anyone's hands but God's? We may think we are, but that is a delusion that will not stand up to reality over time. Only our pride and ego prevent us from realizing that our lives and fates are fragile, fleeting, and ephemeral.

If ever there has been a potential "year of drought" in our lifetimes, this is it! Our apostolates are at risk, and by extension so are we, as well as the at-risk students we serve. Will we respond with fear, or certitude? Will God fail us, or the young people He has entrusted to our care?

If we are true to our Founder, the answer is clear. We are the trees planted by the stream. Our roots go back to 1680. If we trust Him, God will provide us with what we need.

*Brother Paul Ackerman, President*

*De La Salle Blackfeet School, Browning, Montana*

**Friday, March 13**

*Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31*

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Everyone in the world is looking for satisfaction. In our world, more often than not, satisfaction comes from having “things.” These things could be fast cars, or stylish clothes, among numerous other material objects. Our search for satisfaction in objects is one that leads us away from God. People who surround themselves with earthly items tend to feel a sort of emptiness inside, no matter how much they possess. They then go about trying to fill this space with even more costly entities. However, that hole can only be filled by God.

When people commit themselves to an overly extravagant life, they create a chasm between themselves and God. It is easy to get caught in a vicious circle. The need for satisfaction leads to the pursuit of earthly wares, a journey that takes our mind off God. Thus, the chasm deepens, and the empty feeling brought about is mistaken as a deeper wanting; the more the pursuit continues, the deeper the chasm becomes.

In reality, God is the only one who possesses the power to makes us feel whole. He brings about the fulfillment in our life that cannot be provided by anything found on earth. Because God created us, He truly understands us. He is our rock to lean on, and His love is enough to make us feel satisfied and content with our lives. When we devote ourselves to praising God, we no longer have the need to waste our lives chasing material dreams. It is in our realization and devotion to this concept that we secure a place in God’s Kingdom.

*Alyssa Martin, Senior*

*Montini Catholic High School, Lombard, I*

## **Saturday, March 14**

*Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*

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Mistakes—we all make them. Whether it's fighting with your parents, not studying for an important test, or telling a secret you swore to keep, we all know what it feels like to mess up. Maybe that's why the story of the Prodigal Son is one of the most well-known parables in the gospels, because everyone can relate. Mistakes, disappointment, anger, forgiveness, love—we all have experienced these themes in one way or another.

As a teenager, I can especially identify with the younger son in the story. What adolescent hasn't wanted to break free of their parents and experience independence? The problem is not that the son wanted to go out on his own, but that he made the choice to focus on material, passing things rather than his relationship with his father or brother. This, too, is something that we can all relate to. It is almost guaranteed that at sometime in our lives we are going to be hurt by our loved ones, and in turn we will make mistakes that will hurt our loved ones. Sometimes it might get so bad between us and our parents or our siblings or friends that it seems that nothing will ever make it right. But God will always give us a second chance, and a third and a fourth, and however many more chances we need. Nothing is ever so bad that God won't forgive us. So we must follow that example and always give other a second chance, hoping that they will do the same for us when the time comes.

*Carolyn Scorpio, Senior  
Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Paul, MN*

**Monday, March 16**

*2 Kings 5:1-15; Luke 4:24-30*

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**ACCEPTANCE---what comes to mind when you hear that word?**

That was the very question that was put to various people in different situations. Here are just some of the responses received:

*“...accepting our older years, our limitations as we grow older;  
‘Can’t do what I used to do.’”*

*“...taking what happens to you and making the best of it”*

*“...treating each person with kindness and meeting them where they  
are in life”*

*“Creating a spirit of hospitality with all persons we meet...”*

*“Coming to grips with the fact that we need others and they need us”*

*“Rejoicing in the beauty of the world we live in”*

*“...disposition to tolerate or accept people or situations. Act of taking  
something offered: ‘Her acceptance of the gift encouraged him.’ ‘He  
anticipated their acceptance of his offer.’”*

*“Acceptance is actually the very first step in the process of change.”*

Lent can be a time of acceptance, acceptance of our limitations, of the persons, things and situations that we don’t have full control of. It can also be an opportunity to accept wonderful gifts such as forgiveness, healing, change, and new life that are placed before us each day.

Naaman almost failed to accept the gift of healing offered him by the prophet. The people of Jesus’ hometown violently refused the life giving gift offered to them by one of their own. Let us not turn away from the many ways of acceptance that we may come face to face with this holy season of Lent.

*Brother Kent Connolly, Staff Member  
La Salle Retreat Center, Glencoe, MO*

**Tuesday, March 17**

*Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35*

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In Matthew's gospel, Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. The Lord continued by telling a story of a master who, being moved with compassion as a result of his servant/debtor's homage paid to him, forgives his servant's debt.

As an educator, this reading bears to mind the struggle to balance the strong hand of teaching and preparing students for higher education and beyond, with the soft heart of compassion to the struggles of being an adolescent.

How hard should I crack down on deadlines for homework assignments? How long do I try to engage that one student who "doesn't seem to care?" How do I handle excuses? Do I ignore them or allow students to have a voice? If I excuse one, then I must do the same for all, or do I?

Then I think, do I maintain the same standards that I impart on my students. How many times have I been tardy with an assignment due for my job? Have bosses and colleagues been tolerant of me when I'm having a bad day? Am I allowed to have a voice? Do I expect preferential treatment?

Yes, as an educator we need to practice and preach responsibility and accountability but at the same time we must never forget what it was like to be an adolescent in school. Be firm, but caring. Be tough, but empathetic. Be a model of integrity. Every once and a while, take a walk in an adolescent's shoes to help maintain a healthy perspective of working with young people.

*Ted Morgan, Math Teacher, Assistant Campus Minister & Co-Animator  
De La Salle Institute, Chicago, IL*

## Wednesday, March 18

*Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9; Matthew 5:17-19*

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The readings for today talk about decrees, commandments, and statutes, or rather, things that are given to us. When I experience things like these that are given, sometimes, I just *don't understand* them. Sometimes, I *resist* them. Sometimes I *disregard* them; but sometimes—*SOMETIMES*—I recognize that these things aren't always as they first appeared to be.

A couple of years ago I attended a retreat. The first night, after our gathering as a group, the leader requested that we maintain silence until morning. Thinking that this was *clearly* meant for the people attending who saw each other regularly, I took it upon myself to ignore the silence and sought out my friends for an enjoyable evening. Throughout the rest of the weekend, the leader shared how silence had been requested not for the *purpose* of silence or to maintain order, but to “give space to let the Mystery take root” in our heart in a special way.

At the end of the weekend, I wished I had embraced the silence. The next year, I went back to the retreat—longing for the silence, longing for the space to let the mystery become present.

This experience taught me in a unique way that something that is given, whether a commandment from God, a Lenten tradition, or simple direction from one accompanying me on this faith journey, it is not given to keep me *from something*, but is given to point me toward a greater truth and reality.

*Heather Sutton, Creative Marketing Leader  
Saint Mary's Press, Winona, MN*

## **Thursday, March 19, ST. JOSEPH**

*2 Samuel 7:4-5,12-14,16; Romans 4:13,16-18,22; Luke 2:41-51*

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How can one person make the biggest difference in someone's life? Earlier on in my senior year of high school, I went to a nearby organization where volunteers pack food packets that contain food ingredients that when cooked together, could make a meal of six servings. With the help of my fellow classmates, we were able to fill up approximately seventy-five boxes full of these packets, which helped approximately 10,000 children survive hunger for a time.

In Luke 2: 41-51a, Mary tells Jesus they had been searching for him, and Jesus responds, "Why were you searching for me?...Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's House?" Neither Mary nor Joseph understood what he was saying to them. Unbeknownst to them at the time, he eventually grew up to give his life for all of humankind. Sometimes we too may not quite understand the actions done by Jesus, such as him giving his life for us, but I think our everyday actions of kindness can be our own little way of acting out the same kindness Jesus showed us and bringing us one step closer to this understanding.

One person—whether it be by going to pack food, helping at a nearby food shelter or just by being there for someone else—can make a difference in the life of another even if it may not look noticeable at first. Although Mary and Joseph did not fully understand Jesus' action, nonetheless it made all the difference. Even in our own lives, the good that we do may not make sense to us at the time, but the end result could change someone's life.

How will you make a difference?

*Andres Davila, Senior*

*St. Joseph High School, Westchester, IL*

**Friday, March 20**

*Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34*

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*O God, set my heart aflame for love of you; and give me a burning love for my neighbor.*

from Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer, by John Baptist de la Salle

I love the language of Lent, especially in Spanish. Everyday words incarnate deeper meanings for me, more like poetry than normal prose. “Repent” is one of those words. In English, it is commonly used during Lent, and there aren’t other related words that are part of our everyday vocabulary. In Spanish, “repensar” is based on a common everyday word meaning “to think”; repensar means “to re-think, or think again.”

Scripture and DLS’ writings are other places where I find poetic language. Mark provides Jesus’ summation of Hebrew scriptures, the Great Commandment. “Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” De La Salle, who himself lived and passed onto the first Brothers a spirituality grounded in scripture, takes this passage and turns it into a beautiful poetic prayer in his Method of Interior Prayer.

Lasallian pedagogy mirrors Lasallian spirituality. “San Miguel means love.” This is an often quoted phrase from a video about San Miguel in Chicago. It was said by a parent of a San Miguel student who is now on our staff as a teacher. Lasallian pedagogy is grounded in love as described in the Great Commandment. De La Salle directs the first teachers on how to ground their pedagogy in this kind of love in his meditation on Francis de Sales (MTR 101.3) These same questions have become our questions for today:

*Do you have these sentiments of charity and tenderness [love] toward the poor children whom you have to educate? Do you take advantage of their affection for you to lead them to God? If you have for them the firmness of a father to restrain and withdraw them from misbehavior, you **must** also have for them the tenderness of a mother to draw them to you, and to do for them all the good that depends on **you**.*

*Mike Anderer-McClelland, Principal*

*Back of the Yards Campus, San Miguel Schools, Chicago, IL*

**Saturday, March 21**

*Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:19-24*

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In my work as president of a NativityMiguel school, I ask potential benefactors to part with their money so that others might have the opportunity of an empowering education. Today's gospel reading reminds me of our benefactors in general, but it specifically conjures thoughts of a man who looks like many of our benefactors – older, white, and distinguished in appearance – but who, as far as I know, has never given money to our school.

I met him on the sidewalk outside of our school one day, and I thought it curious that he should be walking in our neighborhood – predominantly African-American, poor, and often dangerous – in his fine coat and hat. *Who was this guy? Where was he going?*

He introduced himself as Mr. McReynolds. “I live over there,” he said, pointing to the mostly African-American senior living center across from our school. “I sold all my things,” he smiled, continuing, “and moved down here to live in this neighborhood. This is my home, and everyone here is so welcoming. I love it here.”

A few weeks later, I made a visit to our school on a Saturday because I knew that a benefactor was going to be there handing out items to the poor people of the neighborhood. When I got there, the benefactor had already left. But, curious, I passed the line of people to see what was in the boxes that were being handed out to them. When I made it to the front of the line, to my surprise, there stood Mr. McReynolds.

*Was he passing out goods? Directing traffic? Or was he there to pick up a box of his own?*

I don't know, and I didn't ask. But we shook hands and wished each other a Merry Christmas, and I left knowing that, whatever he was there for, I had just met the exception to the rule: “How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!”

*Corey Quinn, President*

*De La Salle at St. Matthew, St. Louis, MO*

## Monday, March 23

*Isaiah 65:17-21; John 4:43-54*

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In John's Gospel, a royal official approaches Jesus with a request to heal his son. After an exchange, Jesus says, "go your son will live." The man *believed Jesus*, and left. He acted on his belief and trust in Jesus.

On his way home, the official was met with news that his son was well. With a spirit of eagerness, the man asked for the details of his son's healing to confirm his belief that Jesus had done what he said he would do. The time of the healing corresponded with the time he was with Jesus and he attributed the healing to Jesus. His response to this answered prayer was to let it *change his life* and those around him: He and his household believed.

Let us use this model of faith in our own lives. First, pray with *expectant faith: trust and confidence that Jesus* listens and wants the best for us. Next, act upon this faith in thought, speech and action. Look and listen for signs of God's work in our life, remembering that it may not look exactly like what you imagined – God's ways are not always our ways. Finally, let God's work not be forgotten, give thanks and praise by letting His action change your life. Allow God's grace to deepen your hope and further your life of faith.

Please take a moment to reflect on a prayer of your heart: either a current or a past prayer request. Apply this model to your life by inserting your prayer request as applicable. How has Jesus answered you and how will you let that transform you and others around you?

*Jerome Meeds, Director*

*Dunrovin Retreat Center, Marine-on-St.-Croix, MN*

**Tuesday, March 24**

*Ezekiel 47:1-9,12; John 15:1-3,5-16*

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In the reading from Ezekiel, a wonderful stream is flowing out of the temple. God is the water that nourishes us and helps us grow. Whatever has its roots in the water will bloom and never fade. Whoever roots their life in God will be satisfied and rewarded. At the Summer Gathering at Lewis University, our Lasallian Youth community planted a tree together. We all poured the dirt together symbolizing our bond as followers of Saint John Baptist De LaSalle. We prayed together. We are like the tree. Our faith in God is our roots. We are connected together through the mission of De La Salle, yet we are all unique in our own special ways. We will go our separate ways as we branch out into the world. What struck me about the water is that it is always flowing – stagnant water doesn't allow for growth or health. As a senior, I am going to college next year. We all will go down our own paths in life. God calls us to do different things for him. We will be moving forward, but we always know where our roots lie.

The Gospel of John reminds us of two seemingly different things – that we must love one another and that in order to stay healthy, we'll need to prune the things that our taking our energy from connection to Jesus. During Lent, it is important to take time and reflect on the things in our lives that prevent us from growing to our fullest potential. And sometimes the difficult actions of saying “no” or even saying “goodbye” is the way we can show love for ourselves, our God, and the other people God has given us to be branches with.

*How do you stay connected while still moving forward?*

*Cathy Jaskey, Grade 12*

*Driscoll Catholic High School, Addison, IL*

## Wednesday, March 25, THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

*Isaiah 7:10-14, 8-10; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38*

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Sometimes it strikes me that we have a very strange faith. Well, strange to the world, at least. We have a faith that tells us to embrace suffering, but our instincts tell us to run from suffering! We don't want to bear it; we want to avoid it as much as possible, and the world would encourage us to do the same.

How often does the avoidance of suffering lead us into doing something that is morally wrong? If I cheat a little, I'll avoid the pain of failing a test. If I have trouble in my relationship with my spouse, I'll escape the suffering and hard work of that relationship by seeking comfort elsewhere. If I am pregnant and do not want to endure the suffering of bearing and raising that child, I'll have an abortion. And in running from all that suffering, what do we do to ourselves and those around us? In the process of avoiding suffering we reduce ourselves by cultivating qualities that no one admires: cheating, infidelity, destructiveness, etc. We become what is worst about being human.

On the other hand, what if we embrace that suffering? We can then become the people we were meant to be: honorable, compassionate, loving, and life-giving. I imagine Mary as a young girl close in age to some of our students. I have seen the pain and suffering that pregnant teens endure. While I don't advocate teen pregnancy, I have to admire the ones who choose life, when it would be so much "easier" to choose abortion. In her simple acceptance of God's will in her life, even though she had to know it would mean great suffering, Mary shows us the way. It is the beginning of The Way of the Cross. Because of Mary's "yes" we are able to become what is best about being human.

*"Let it be done to me according to your word."*

May we be like Mary, and bring Christ to the world.

*Mary Ann Teshima, Teacher  
Roncalli High School, Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

**Thursday, March 26**

*Exodus 32:7-14; John 5:31-47*

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In the reading from John, we are given two negative statements, “You do not want to come to have life,” and “I know you do not have the love of God in you.” Both of these may be true in some instances, and there are times when statements like this move people from their lethargy. As a teacher, one finds that noticing the good in students helps them to grow in that quality or ability. Hopefully the majority of people could be affirmed and helped to grow with statements like these, “You want to come to God,” or “You have the love of God.” This last Christmas a bishop from one of our dioceses wrote these words in his Christmas message, “If you have distanced yourself from God, COME HOME; for there is a God who is so madly in love with you that this God cannot tolerate any distancing.” When we are mindful of God’s great love for us, we will want to have life with God, and also love this God as madly as He loves us.

If there is a time we drift from God, as did the Israelites in the Exodus story, we need to remember the words of Moses, “The Lord relented in his punishment.” It shows us how easy it is for a loving and compassionate God to forgive and shower us with love.

Loving God, we thank you for the many ways you show us Your love. Help us to accept Your love and generously share it with all who enter our lives.

*Sister Emma Buresh, SSND, Board Member  
San Miguel Middle School of Minneapolis*

**Friday, March 27**

*Wisdom 2:1, 12-22; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30*

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So often, we as Christians might be challenged to “ask the right questions” in terms of spirituality and faith. In our reading from the book of Wisdom, the wicked condemn the idea of the Son of Man rising from the dead, in part because no one had ever been raised from the dead, and if God’s own son were to enter the world, He of course would deliver His son from the hands of his enemies! Fast forward to the Gospel of John, where those observing the Feast of Tabernacles sit in the background wondering aloud if Christ truly was the one that the authorities wanted to kill, and if they realized that Jesus is the Messiah. Better questions to ask here might be if it is now possible for God to give life to the dead or to forsake His son after being ridiculed. Maybe at the Feast of Tabernacles, a better question might be to ask when the time will come for the Son of Man to lay down his life.

For a long time, I was under the belief that there is no such thing as a bad question. I held this belief into my freshman year at Saint Mary’s University. Fr. Andrew Fabian challenged the congregation at Mass to pause and consider what it is that we seek and question, especially when we are asking it of the Lord. Lent is the perfect opportunity to allow the Paschal Mystery to resurrect the parts of our lives and character that may need work. All things are made new in the Lord.

*Tom Thielen, SMU*

*Lasallian Teacher Immersion Program*

**Saturday, March 28**

*Jeremiah 11:18-20; John 7:40-53*

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In the gospel today, there is some confusion around who Jesus really is. When he spoke, it was clear to many that he was a prophet. To others, it was apparent he was the Christ. There was uncertainty and confusion even among the officers sent to bring him before the Pharisees, simply because of the way in which he spoke.

But despite what they could see with their own eyes, heard with their ears, and knew in their heart, there was still division among the people about whether or not Jesus was the Christ. In their heads they looked at this poor man from Galilee and judged that he couldn't be the promised messiah, descendent of David. This could not be the King that scripture has foretold.

How often do we look for God in our lives with our heads instead of our hearts? Or perhaps we have already decided where and through whom God will come into our lives. A question we must be willing to ask is: "Are we ready to allow Christ to enter our lives in new and unexpected ways this Lent?"

Spend a few minutes today reflecting on ways in which you have allowed what you know in your head to keep you from truly seeing God with your heart. St. John Baptist de La Salle said, "Look beyond the rags of the poor children whom you teach, and see the Christ-child lying in the manger." Reflect for a few minutes on the people and places that you have already decided couldn't possibly be filled with Christ. Pray that today you will see with your heart and find Christ.

*Andrew Blake, Campus Ministry  
Totino-Grace High School, Fridley, MN*

## **Monday, March 30**

*Daniel 13:1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62; John 8:1-11*

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Those in the apostolate of the Christian schools encounter quite often the incidents of quarrels, spats, thefts and disagreements among the students. Collecting all the suspected culprits, separating them and having them tell their versions of the incidents often exposes those who are lying and those who are telling the truth. This “Susannah” technique from today’s first reading has helped many of us in the past and will help us today and in the future in sorting out the truth of these incidents and the passage also teaches us to be prudent and not hasty in making the hard choices that come our way as Christian educators. And years after the Susannah incident, Jesus Himself takes His time in front of the impetuous “judges” of the woman accused of adultery. There is a “method” in his purposed drawing in the sand, slowing down His own thought process and the thoughts of the woman’s accusers. She herself is made to pause after the accusers leave. There is no condemnation in Jesus’ remarks to her, but there is important instruction: Go, and from now on, sin no more. We sons and daughters of St. De La Salle in our holy apostolate of Christian education of youth are taught by today’s readings to both refrain from condemnation of wrongdoers and at the same time, instruct them in justice, love and Christ-like living.

*Jesus, our supreme teacher, help us this day in our noble work of Christian education to have the wisdom to sort out the truth, separate it from untruth, give just penances to wrongdoers and encourage them to accept their penances and learn from their mistakes and may all of this be done in a spirit of faith, love and hope for their ultimate good which is union with You, God Your Father and Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Brother Joel McGraw, Assistant Principal  
Christian Brothers High School, Memphis, TN*

**Tuesday, March 31**

*Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30*

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In today's Gospel, Moses and Jesus play a similar role, which is that of a teacher. Moses is leading the Hebrews out of Egypt through the desert, while Jesus leads His disciples through a conversation about who He truly is, the Son of God. In both stories, there is lack of understanding and faith. The Hebrews become fearful of the desert because they do not think that they can survive alone, even though God's spirit is with them. The disciples do not comprehend Jesus is the Son of Man.

In these two distinct cases, suffering makes the people realize the power and goodness of God. The Hebrew people were punished with poisonous snakes that sickened them. Through this disaster, the people turned to God, and the Forgiving Lord helped cure the sick people with an open heart. In John's Gospel, Jesus told the disciples, "...When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM..." Jesus is referring to his crucifixion.

In the Bible, people sometimes have difficulty in understanding Who or what God is. People do not understand God, and therefore do not know what to believe or how to believe. For me, God is simply every good moment in my life and every good deed that I have seen or accomplished. In that case, the only way I can show my love for God is to believe and trust in Him when times are rough. The thought of and faith in God always helps me endure and conquer any obstacle. What is God to you, and how can you show your appreciation?

*Andrew Ciepela, Junior*

*Saint Patrick High School, Chicago, IL*

## Wednesday, April 1

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

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In Daniel's reading, King Nebuchadnezzar orders the worship of his false golden idol, and that those who refuse be cast into the fiery furnace. He later witnesses those who trusted in the true God, dancing and rejoicing in the flames. John's Gospel then speaks of freedom from sin and turning our trust to the Lord's goodness.

Both readings touch largely on issues of judgment. How often do we slip and boast, or attempt to impose our own way without *hearing* others? It is when we harbor fearful judgments on others that Jesus teaches us to let go, let go of our arrogance and pride, and embrace the coming of the Lord's gentle touch. As Jesus states, through sin, we are slaves, and though it may sometimes feel insurmountable, if we let go and allow ourselves *listen* to the goodness of others, we *hear* the Lord. Only then do we slow ourselves down enough to humbly abandon the judgments that strangle our own goodness.

This season is a time to find peace from within, to forgive others, to dance, rejoice, and overcome the flames of fear and pride in our lives that attempt to tarnish our goodness. As Jesus came to show us how to love and forgive in the face of death, we must also focus on God's love and know that He does not judge us for our mistakes. The Lord will deliver us from evil if we resurrect the humble trust that God carries all of us in His good hands.

*Brendan Corcoran, Lasallian Volunteer, Teacher  
San Miguel, Tulsa, OK*

**Thursday, April 2**

*Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59*

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*“Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.”*

The story of Abraham is, for me, not primarily about God making an infertile man “exceedingly fertile” due to his faith. As a husband who struggles with his own infertility, this story does not provide me with hope that someday God will also bless my wife and I with a child, as he did for Abraham and Sarah. Yet, this story really is all about fertility and hope. Just not on a biological level. I identify with Abraham when Jesus says to the Jews: “Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.”

Like Abraham, I hope in God for the fertility of my life. I trust that God will exceedingly bless my work so that it will bear fruit. The legacy of Abraham is in the covenantal faith which his descendents inherited from him and was fulfilled in their salvation. Through God’s grace, I rejoice and am glad when I see the day one of my students embrace the Christian faith and live the life of Jesus. I rejoice in the day when a colleague gets turned on by the Lasallian charism and finds their work renewed and energized. The Jesus event was the fulfillment of Abraham’s faith in God. Like Abraham I rejoice and am glad when I see my faith and hope fulfilled in those to whom I minister.

*Doug Bosch, Theology Teacher*

*Holy Family Catholic High School, Victoria, MN*

**Friday, April 3**

*Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42*

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In today's Gospel, John speaks specifically about believing in the goodness of an action, even if you don't accept the person doing it: judge a person by his deeds. The Jews feared Jesus because of whom he said he was, and were skeptical of his motives, much as we are today if someone claims to be motivated by God. What Jesus is reminding them and us, is to recognize that goodness is from God.

Jesus' purpose is of God, so his actions were always good. His actions fulfilled Jeremiah's statement, "for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked." Jesus saves from the power of suspicion and disbelief. That was what he was saying then and now.

When I went on the Lasallian Holy Week Mission to Mexico last year, the people I met treated me in the way the Jesus described in the Gospel. I was judged not as the American, whose country has little compassion for migrants, but as the young man who came with the Gospel. Our presence in their lives was a life-giving, faith-filled experience for them and their children. They will remember us for the rest of their lives. What I did not expect was the powerful effect they would have on me and my future. In a sense, echoing Jeremiah, they rescued me from "the power of the wicked." Their generosity and loving example affected my future especially in the choice of my career. Before Missions I had little interest in helping people, my future was something that I would use to better myself not necessarily anyone else. After Missions, my perspective changed, I wanted to continue to be of service to the community as well as doing the things I enjoy. Because of this, I choose to enter healthcare profession.

*Chance Norton, Senior*

*O'Hara High School, Kansas City, MO*

## **Saturday, April 4**

*Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56*

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To embrace these readings, is to embrace the blessing and mystery of community. In Ezekiel, God gives them their identity: “children of Israel,” “one nation upon the land,” and God specifically lays out the sacred relationship: “they may be my people and I may be their God.” And this covenant is a “covenant of peace.” For Jesus, he gives of himself for the sake of “not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God.”

It is hard for us to find modern day witnesses who give and sacrifice so generously for the community, especially for a community that continually falls short of the vision of God. Yet, this God does not operate our way... our God loves us beyond any rational criteria that one could offer. God is our shepherd, and like the animals themselves, we are sheep who wander, sin, and fall short. Yet, there is nothing too awful, too horrific, too flawed or sinful about us that would cause God to abandon the covenant. God does not break promises - God loves us that much. He remains with us, whether we break rank or not. God loves us - no strings. And this awesome gift should provoke a response from us to strengthen our part of this most holy relationship.

*David Haas, Campus Minister / Artist in Residence  
Benilde-St. Margaret's School, St. Louis Park, MN*

## **Monday, April 6, Holy Week**

*Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11*

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Today's readings illustrate that we are all called to be servants of the Lord in our own special, unique ways. Isaiah foreshadows the coming of the Messiah, calling Him the "Servant of the Lord." This servant will bring justice to the world and call everyone to live righteously. Likewise, as Christians, we seek to bring gentleness, truth, and justice to the world, thus showing God to the world in a personal way.

However, this is not always an easy task. Before we are able to show God's light to the world, we must first find God's light within ourselves. This includes the ability to put our full faith in the ways of the Lord and be open and willing to hear our calling to become closer to Him serve His more fully. There are countless ways to serve the Lord, from personal meditation to working in a Catholic Workers House to being attentive to the needs of your family members and friends. No work is too small or grand for the Lord.

We are all different candles, but lit from the same fire – Jesus Christ.

*Leigh Hill, Junior*

*Christian Brothers University, Memphis, TN*

## **Tuesday, April 7, Holy Week (St. John Baptist de La Salle)**

*Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33,36-38*

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Today, as we celebrate the feast of John Baptist de La Salle, God reminds us of our baptismal call to be prophets. From the moment God created us in our mother's womb, we received our prophetic call, as proclaimed by Isaiah. The question is: How have we accomplished this mission so far?

To whom and how have we pass on God's liberating love? To whom and how have we challenged individuals and society to be more just, promote peace, and have a preferential option for the poor? To whom and how have we made present the reign of God among the disadvantaged, the weak, and the marginalized? To whom and how have we served in our daily life and in critical times?

Let us remember John Baptist de La Salle as the prophet who pioneered education for the poor as means to receive Jesus' new life. De la Salle struggled against the status quo to educate the young in their own language and environment, when education was only for the privileged classes. By fulfilling his prophetic mission he opened a channel for upward mobility through education, becoming a light of the nations, as Isaiah in his time.

Now it is our turn to respond to Gods' word. The gospel of John regarding Jesus' betrayal by two of his disciples intensifies the challenge in the reading of Isaiah. Are we faithful disciples who are light for the underserved in our own nation and those in need in other nations... or are we traitors unwilling to carry out our prophetic vocation?

*Carmen María Cervantes, Executive Director  
Instituto Fe y Vida, Stockton, CA*

## **Wednesday, April 8, Holy Week**

*Isaiah 50:4-9; Matthew 26:14-25*

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*Isaiah 50: 4-9*

The first words of verses 4 and 5 rang true for me in my ministry as a Faith Community Nurse. I could never have imagined when I started my journey as a hospital nurse thirty-seven years ago that God would bring me to a place where I'm mindful of God's presence in my work. I am grateful for the many opportunities I am given to speak and listen to the weary.

One of the images that came to mind was a bookmark I purchased from a small shop in St. Joseph Michigan a few years ago. The words, "Do Not Be Afraid", were at the top of the bookmark with a picture of Pope John Paul II under the words. It was that moment when I knew God was right there working in my life to remind me of what Isaiah tells us in these verses. I've discovered that facing conflicts is another gift God has bestowed on me to feel His presence and protection. Isaiah reminds me that the Sovereign Lord is right here to give me support.

My hope is that on my journey to serve God by listening and speaking to people with physical, mental, or spiritual health issues, I will remember to ask God how I can best serve him with my words or by listening.

*Sheila Cusack, District Nurse  
Midwest District*

## **April 9, HOLY THURSDAY**

*Exodus 12:1-8,11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15*

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

In the southern borderlands of the United States a group called “No More Deaths” commits itself to advocating for immigrant rights while working daily to provide for the needs of those crossing through their community. They set up water stations, help with first aid and provide basic humanitarian service, with the motto “Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime.” One of their primary ministries has become washing feet. Families and individuals making the long and dangerous journey from Central and South America into the U.S. in hopes of a more sustainable financial life endure great pain and risk to their bodies. Badly blistered and scarred feet are compassionately washed and wrapped by volunteers with No More Deaths.

Today we remember the first Mass, Jesus’ last meal with friends. His final evening with them provides us with an example of servant leadership. Tonight we re-enact the simple act Jesus shares with his own friends. We attend Churches and awkwardly remove our shoes and socks to let strangers wash our feet and share in washing another’s feet. It’s an often uncomfortable yet beautiful way to serve and be served exactly like Jesus did. John reveals that serving others is at the very core of being a follower of Jesus. We are humbled and honored to be served and to serve others.

How can you “wash the feet” of your co-workers, students, guests, clients, community members?

What can your community/school/organization do to extend Jesus’ example to serve others?

*For more information on No More Deaths, check out:*

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

*Kendall Marsden, Co-Director*

*Harvey House Community, Chicago, IL*

## **April 10, GOOD FRIDAY**

*Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16,5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42*

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As a devout Jew Jesus was well aware of Isaiah's description of what would be in store for the Messiah. On the political stage He would also be aware of the horrible death the Romans would inflict upon Him.

Yet His faith and trust in His Father allowed him to relinquish control of His life. He knew that should He not do so, the New Testament in His blood would not come into being. He trusted completely that His death would be followed by His resurrection and God's plan for salvation would continue.

In keeping with St. de la Salle's bequest of the Spirit of Faith to us – can we relinquish control of the works we have established?

God the Father has entrusted to us the founding of the educational institutions we have. It is God's work we have furthered so far. For His plan to go forward we are being asked to relinquish those institutions to other workers.

In a manner of speaking, our relinquishing control is a form of death and perhaps a form we are afraid of embracing. Just as God raised Jesus from his death so to can God 'raise' the institutions we have established. God knows what good such a resurrection will do to further His plans for them.

Does our faith and trust in God allow us to do so?

*Brother Matthew Smith*

*Lambert Hall Community, Memphis, TN*

## April 11, HOLY SATURDAY

*Romans 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7*

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“Who will roll away the stone?” they wondered. And why not? They wanted to see Jesus again, to anoint him, to not have to let go. But Jesus anticipated their need. As they discovered when they arrived at the tomb, they didn’t have to do anything. Jesus had taken care of it.

This final reflection is about Easter, not Lent. If you made it this far, you have survived these forty days. But are we remembering that the prayer, penitence, almsgiving, and self-denial were not for God’s sake; they were to discipline us to be to others what Jesus is to us. We often believe that we have to “make up to God” for the times we’ve fallen. But Jesus really did roll back the stone, not only for the women who came to anoint him, but for us.

I learned a wonderful song while on retreat in January. “Here I Am” is written by Tom Booth, who happened to be our music minister for the retreat. One of the verses is relevant here:

*Do not fear when the tempter calls you. Do not fear even though you fall. Do not fear, I have conquered evil. Do not fear, never be afraid.  
Here I am, standing right beside you. Here I am, do not be afraid.  
Here I am, waiting like a lover. I am here; here I am.*

Jesus is here, and Lent 2009 is behind us. Maybe we can start eating chocolate again, or watch TV on weekdays, or cut back on our donations to the food shelf but, for our own betterment, we should continue to pray, do penance and the works of mercy, to discipline ourselves. But **not** to satisfy God. Jesus did that.

*Bro. Frank Carr, Visitor  
Midwest District*

**HAPPY EASTER!**