loyola marymount university
lenten reflections
Dear Members of the LMU Community,

Campus Ministry is happy to offer you this book of Lenten Reflections. Lent is a special time in the liturgical year and in the life of the church. The season itself and its wonderful daily readings invite us to focus on the central realities of our faith. In this little book, we have gathered day-by-day reflections written by students, Jesuits, women religious, faculty and staff members. It is the prayerful result of their reflections on the Scripture of the day. This book is an invitation to engage in your faith during this Lent and a symbol of the diversity of ways in which our community prays. Each reflection and prayer is a gift from the writers with the hope that they might support your Lenten journey.

On each page you will find the daily Mass readings, reflections, prayers and questions for further consideration.

By accepting a copy of this book, you really have accepted an invitation to hear the word of God and to let it “come to flesh” even more completely in your life. All of us in Campus Ministry wish you God’s blessing and peace during these holy Lenten days as we await the joy of Easter.

Sincerely,

Rev. James D. Erps, S.J.
Director of Campus Ministry
Rend your hearts, not your garments. Joel 2:13

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10; and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Each year on Ash Wednesday we mark our foreheads with ashes as we recall that our bodies are made from the dust of the earth and will return to dust. We thus remind ourselves that the pleasures of the flesh are fleeting, while life nurtured by Christ’s Spirit endures. The 40+ days of Lent, leading to the celebration of the Easter mysteries, are a time to refocus our priorities.

The question, “What are you giving up for Lent?” speaks to the Lenten practice of fasting—of cutting back or eliminating the “fat” from our diet. But fasting is not just a matter of cutting back on rich food and drink. It can refer also to the taming of other bodily appetites. The discipline of fasting frees us to hear more clearly the deeper desires of our souls.

Besides fasting, today’s Gospel passage from Matthew mentions two other important Lenten practices: prayer and almsgiving. Prayer is the opening of our minds and hearts to God. It can be liturgical prayer, for example, finding extra opportunities to attend Mass. Or it can be devotional prayer, such as taking part in traditional exercises like the Stations of the Cross or Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. And of course it can be personal prayer, perhaps at a favorite spot on campus but always in the “inner room” of our hearts. Personal prayer takes the
form of an *examen of consciousness*. We quietly reflect on how God has been at work in our lives. Then we give thanks for the blessings of the day, ask forgiveness for our failures to love as we should and seek guidance for the challenges of tomorrow.

The third Lenten practice is almsgiving. A friend of mine sets aside a few dollars each week to give to a worthy cause or, more directly, to a homeless person he chances to meet. But it is also almsgiving to donate time and energy to help those in need by, for example, participating in the outreach of a service organization, making sandwiches for Feed the Hungry or joining a program like Underwings. Another form of almsgiving is sharing one’s talents, as happens when a student volunteers to help a classmate who was sick catch up on an assignment.

May these traditional practices—fasting, prayer and almsgiving—guide each of us on our Lenten journey.

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:**
What will be my personal Lenten practices this year? In what areas of my life can I benefit from the discipline of fasting? What new or renewed experiences of prayers and the sacraments might I embrace? What works of mercy toward those in need can I undertake with a joyful heart?

Reflection and Questions by Rev. Robert V. Caro, S.J.
Choose … Deuteronomy 30:19

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1; and Luke 9:22-25

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Our choices establish who we are. We can call ourselves any number of things, but it is our choices that demonstrate what we truly are. There is no compartmentalizing our Christian Catholic faith on the one hand and the way we live our lives on the other—the two are inseparably and integrally linked. More often than not, the seemingly trivial and overlooked decisions tend to get us into trouble because they are the foundations of many of our habits. Anything from the TV shows we choose to watch to the way we choose to speak to those closest to us: these are the building blocks to cementing good or bad habits, as well as our sensitivity or de-sensitivity to what is right and wrong.

Of course, we are all human and fallen, and the contrast between the two paths presented in today’s readings is extremely vivid. The overall message is one of amazing and incredible hope, of a final destination where the greatest and most piercingly sweet victory is awaiting those who “hope in the Lord” and “hold fast to Him.” Today especially looks forward to Christ’s triumphal Resurrection, which also reaffirms the promise of our own glorious salvation. Consequently, the imagery used in the readings is very comforting and encouraging because God directly attests to being the One who is always ready and waiting to embrace us, to lift us up, to sustain us, to give us the grace to carry out His will, and above all, to give us perfect and everlasting life. Our faith, trust, love, openness and steadfast commitment are all that He asks of us in return. The exchange is truly extraordinary when we “choose life” because almighty God bestows us with an existence of ultimate flourishing and happiness that is without compare and beyond our wildest hopes and dreams in measure and intensity.

One of the great beauties of our belief as Catholics and Christians is that our God is a God of action. He is not static, and He is not indifferent. As a result, our faith is likewise inherently one of action. The choice is ours whether to follow through with that action, but only those who “take up their crosses and follow” Christ can
ever hope to share in His Resurrection because only they have “chosen life.” We are “the light of the world,” and the eyes of many are watching the examples we set. Let us make our examples excellent ones—let us “choose life”—because the world just might follow.

A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Gracious and ever-living God, grant us the grace to always and everywhere remain faithful to You. Grant us the strength and courage to hold steadfastly to what is right, so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. Never let us leave You, but fill us with Your mighty love so that we may know what true contentment, peace, life and flourishing are, and thus desire to remain always in Your beatific presence. In longing to be more fully united with You and at one with Your ever-wise and providential will, may we always cling to You, and so receive the life with which You long to bless us. In Jesus’ name we pray, through the intercession of His Blessed Mother with all the angels and saints.
Amen.

Reflection and Prayer by Trinity O’Neill ’10
Friday after Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 19, 2010

“*The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.*” Matthew 9:15

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 58:1-9; Psalm 51; and Matthew 9:14-15

LENTEN REFLECTION:

Lent is a time of fasting and sacrifice. It is also a time for reflection and growth. During Lent we are asked to fast and pray like Jesus did for 40 days in the desert. However, sometimes we fast in ways we think are good, but God reminds us otherwise. In Isaiah 58, we see true fasting. God explains how we can fast to please Him in a selfish way. We do it so we can gain something from God like attention and pride. We ask Him to see us and we try to show off for Him by fasting. God tells us that we do not have to sacrifice by giving up something for ourselves, but instead by doing something for others. God asks us to give actions of love and justice to our dear neighbor. We all have busy schedules so giving time to others is a way of sacrifice, but it is out of love and compassion as well. God sees all that we do. We do not have to try to make Him recognize us because He always does. He just asks us to follow Jesus’ example and to remain humble of heart as humans and sinners.

In Matthew 9, Jesus answers a question about fasting, and it is a question He calls us to ponder as well. The disciples of John ask, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast [much], but your disciples do not fast?” Then Jesus answers, “Can wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” In this passage, Jesus is preparing His disciples and us for His death. He explains how the disciples cannot mourn Jesus while He is with them. But when Jesus sacrifices Himself and He is not among them, then they will truly understand the meaning of fasting. Jesus calls us to reflect on the meaning of fasting and also to fast like Jesus tells the disciples to do.
Friday after Ash Wednesday
FEBRUARY 19, 2010

A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Merciful Lord,
Help me to understand You and know Your abundant compassion,
Help me to fast in ways that are acceptable to You and keep me humble of heart.
Teach me to be patient and love my dear neighbor as I should.
Give me courage to sacrifice myself, give shelter to those who need it, and feed the hungry and less fortunate.
Help me to reflect, pray and take action in fasting this Lenten season so that I may grow closer to You.
Help me to understand what it means to fast, and ultimately give me strength to sacrifice and love like You.
Amen.

Reflection and Prayer by Amanda Pesqueira ’12
And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. Isaiah 58:10

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 58:9-14; Psalm 86; and Luke 5:27-32

LENTEN REFLECTION:
We enter the season of Lent shortly after the Christmas season. At first glance, the messages of these seasons may seem unrelated. Christmas is about giving—giving gifts to others, living fully in the joys of the season and sharing all one has. Lent is a season of giving up—giving up something you enjoy for 40 days in honor of the time Jesus spent in the desert. We give up bad habits in hopes of moving closer to God. These acts of self-sacrifice remind us of our love for God and why we are willing to give up anything on Earth to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This tradition is important, reminding us all of our ultimate gift from the Lord.

These seasons do not have to be as unconnected as they seem. I like to think these two seasons actually have in common and are congruent with one another. We can use the season of Lent to build upon the love and giving that we celebrate during the Christmas season in the name of Jesus, God’s gift to us. We can take it one step further and self-reflect on how God impacts our communities and why we value this relationship so much. Lent is an opportunity to commit to the Lord by giving to others and taking care of one another in the ways God challenges us to do all year long.

Lent is an amazing occasion to grow closer to God. What better way to self-reflect on what your relationship with God means than by serving in the name of the Lord? We are called to do God’s work here on Earth, and Lent is a chance to fulfill our calling, our respect and our love God has for us. In addition to being a period of self-sacrifice, Lent is an opportunity to share your time with a child, to serve the hungry at a shelter and to grow your love and passion for God through humanitarian work.
QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
The Lord answers our needs; how can we answer the needs of others?

Reflection and Question by Sara Agostinelli, Residence Life
“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.” Luke 4:1-2

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91; Romans 10:8-13; and Luke 4:1-13

LENTEN REFLECTION:
We all have experiences of temptation, and those experiences reveal a lot about ourselves. They tell us about our weaknesses, desires and values. After the experience of hearing God say, “You are my beloved,” Jesus went into the desert to be with his “Abba.” There, He experienced three different temptations that tested His profound experience of being God’s beloved.

The first temptation of turning stone into bread reveals Jesus’ hunger for food. The hunger touched the core of His humanity, making Him want to do anything to survive. He was faced with two choices: to fulfill His physical need or to believe that there must be more to life than fulfilling physical needs. Jesus chose the latter. His choice confirms His profound experience of being beloved, knowing He does not live on bread alone but on His Abba’s love.

The second temptation of power and glory reveals Jesus’ hunger for power to change the world and to help those in need. The devil knew Jesus’ goodness and desire to live out His experience of being beloved, so the devil tempted Him to do whatever it took to have that power. Jesus could have chosen to trample on other people or dehumanize Himself to worship others in order to climb up the social ladder like many leaders in power. Yet, He chose to believe that true power comes from within, where God is the one who gives and Him alone shall Jesus serve.

The third temptation of “throwing yourself down” reveals Jesus’ hunger for God’s love. At the core of all humans is the desire for God’s love and presence in our lives. We want to have some tangible sign or proof that we are loved. Like young lovers, we might say, “If you love me, then prove it.” Or “If there is a God, prove it.” The devil knew this and tempted Jesus to test God’s love by challenging God to prove it. Jesus chose not to test God but to let God be God.
A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Merciful God, may this Lenten season help me enter into the desert with Jesus and become more aware of my temptations. Amen.

Reflection and Prayer by Rev. Manh Tran, S.J.
 Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am Holy.” Leviticus 19:2

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Psalm 23; and Matthew 16:13-19

LENTEN REFLECTION:
The season of Lent is associated, in the minds of many Catholics, with the practice of giving something up. This is in some sense proper, because the Church does stress the importance of penance, fasting and abstinence during Lent. But why? Many people undertake their Lenten practice by choosing to give up something, for example coffee or alcohol, that is really nothing more than an adult analogue of a child’s decision to forego candy. But penance is not simply denial for the sake of self-abuse; it is part of repentance, turning away from sin and back to God. Penance, fasting, almsgiving and abstinence are good for many reasons, but one important aspect of these practices is conversion. These practices help us to move from a sinful way of life toward a life in Christ.

If this is the case, our Lenten sacrifices should be undertaken in the spirit of conversion and out of a desire to improve ourselves and our relationship with God. Reflecting on this, one has to wonder why many of us so quickly and enthusiastically return to our pre-Lenten behaviors after the Tridium. This might be proper if the penance in question is simply a deprivation. However, if a person gives up something, in part, because she believes that it will help make her closer to God and help her to be a better person, perhaps she should not be so quick to resume that behavior.

Lent has always been, and will remain, a season of special fasting, penance and abstinence. But perhaps we should be concerned with turning from sin and toward God, with being better versions of ourselves, with being more holy, for more than 40 days of the year. Our (re)conversion, our turning to God, is not supposed to be episodic, but something we engage in with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). Friends of mine often ask why people can’t behave all year long the same way they do during Advent, that is, with the “Christmas spirit” of goodwill to all people. We might ask the same thing about Lent.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Have I chosen Lenten practices that will actually improve the person I am and improve my relationship with God? Given that Lent is a season of conversion from an old way of life to a new life in Christ, how can I improve the person I am and improve my relationship with God, not for 40 days but for good?

Reflection and Questions by Professor Brian Treanor, Department of Philosophy
“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” Matthew 6:8

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 5:10-11; Psalm 34; and Matthew 6:7-15

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Many times in our lives we worry about the little things. We concern ourselves not with the big picture, but the minute details in our lives. As a student for the majority of my life, I am constantly stressed about an assignment, a meeting or a test. These things are all important, but they are not worth becoming unhealthy or damaging my relationship with God. It has been a struggle in my own life, as it has been for many of my friends, to put the worries in my life into the hands of God. God will supply much for us because we are His children. He may not take away our troubles, but He will be there, always with us. As the beautiful poem “Footprints” by Margaret Powers puts it: “My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.” God is always going to be with us, either walking beside us or carrying us, so why worry about the little things? We need to trust in God, put all fears and struggles into His hands. In chapter six of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives us a simple way to praise God and request God to assist us throughout our daily lives with “The Lord’s Prayer.”

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Ask yourself these questions while you say “The Lord’s Prayer:” Do you fully trust in God? Do you allow God to enter into your life and assist with your worries and concerns?

Reflection and Questions by Michael Bachmeier ’13
“Give me back the joy of your salvation. Sustain in me a generous spirit.”
Psalm 51:12

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: John 3:1-10; Psalm 51; and Luke 11:29-32

A LENTEN PRAYER:
O Lord, on this eighth day of the Lenten season 
let me realize I have been baptized in the Spirit. 
Allow this Spirit to live within me, 
at all times truly reflecting Your greatest good. 
Although this goodness is within me, 
sometimes I falter and fail to do Your will. 
Please help me to be well aware of these offenses I have committed 
against You and others. 
I am so deeply sorry for each and every sin. 
I ask for Your total forgiveness. 
In Your everlasting love, 
please allow Your Spirit to enlighten in me the joy of Your salvation. 
I want to uphold Your generous Spirit in me 
and realize that I never want to live without it. 
With this I will be able to question my words and actions 
and challenge myself to live each day as You would. 
Amen.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
O God, how have I faltered today and what will I do to regain Your ever-loving Spirit?

Prayer and Question by Jennifer Monohan ’11
“Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Matthew 7:7

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138; and Matthew 7:7-12

LENTEN REFLECTION:
It’s easy for us to say “no” to some people. We think: “She doesn’t know how hard it is for me to do this.” “He’s wasted so many opportunities before.” “I’m already too busy getting ready for class. I don’t have time to do that.”

And sometimes we think God is just like us: irritated with huge requests, impatient with procrastinations, focused on the big picture.

Today Jesus tells us: “Not so fast. Your Heavenly Father wants to give your heart’s desire to you.” And no one should know better than Jesus—his dearly beloved Son.

So we have to think fast. And think deeply. What is it I want? Is it peace and forgiveness among my family members? Is it mutual respect and a sense of personal dignity among my friends and with the professors and support staff here at LMU? Is it personal courage that I may address a terrible addiction or bad habit in my life?

Jesus wants us to know that as the Father empowered Him to become the person whose love would ultimately lead Him to “give all so that all might live,” so too with the Father’s help, we can find ways to ask, to seek, to knock and thereby come closer to experiencing our heart’s deepest desire.
THoughts for Further Reflection:
Today let us focus on three things:

1. Let’s not let our own ways of saying “no” to others blind us to our Heavenly Father’s deepest desire: to give, to let goodness be found, to open doors for those who want to talk.

2. Let’s think deeply and quickly about what our deepest desire is, and ask, seek, knock for it in all the ways our Heavenly Father shows us.

3. Let’s say “yes” today to someone who asks for something that we would have ordinarily responded to with a “no.”

Reflection and Thoughts by Sr. Nadine McGuinness, C.S.J.
If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. Psalm 130:3-4

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130; and Matthew 5:20-26

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Here’s a strange concept to ponder: God will not remember you. At least, He will not remember the “past you,” which is defined by the actions that you have done in the past. We often have a tendency to define who we are by our past actions, by where we are from and by what things we have done. We certainly define others by this criteria—the entire philosophy behind our justice system is founded on judging an individual for his past actions. But according to Ezekiel, God does not judge us this way. He has no memory for the past; He doesn’t bear any grudges. He only beholds how we are now, how we are in the present. It’s as if the original act of creation has never ceased, has never been finalized; our current state of being is just as new and fresh to God as the very first word that He uttered.

If this was not the way of the world, then as Psalm 130 points out, who among us could still be left standing in God’s world? Ezekiel tells us that to be a sinner is to die, but to turn away from sin is to live. God is pure love, and this is why we continue to live, in spite of our sins. He never stops forgiving us, never stops forgetting what we’ve done, never stops letting us begin anew. God loves us because we are all His children, not because of any actions that we have or have not done.

So why, then, do we still need to atone for our sins? The reason is that even though God does not remember, we humans still do. We must atone because we must forgive ourselves, because we must forgive others, and because we must seek forgiveness from others. To sin, says Ezekiel, is to die. This is not a literal death, but a death in the sense that we have turned away from God’s ways, and God’s ways are the source of all life. For us to be righteous, we must be like God, we must forget about valuing people based on actions, and instead simply love all of creation as purely and as forgivingly as God himself does. This is why Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 we should leave our sacrifices at the altar, and first go be
reconciled with our brother or sister who we have wronged. It is their forgiveness that we should be seeking, not that of God who has already forgiven us.

This imperative of forgiveness is also why Jesus says in Matthew 5 that we must be more righteous than the Pharisees and the teachers of the law to be able to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This at first seems like a tall order. The idea that we must be as perfect as God in order to be righteous seems daunting and impossible. But we are not asked to be all-powerful or all-knowing. We are simply asked to be all-loving. And this is something that requires no power and no knowledge. Even the smallest children are capable of being as all-loving as God.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What is it that scares us most about being all-loving? God has given us life itself—does being all-loving mean being prepared to give back to God his most precious gift? Is this what Psalm 130 means when it says that God is feared?

Reflection and Questions by Paul Beckwith ’10
Happy are those who observe God’s decrees, who seek the Lord with all their heart. Psalm 119:2

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119; and Matthew 5:43-48

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Reading and understanding these passages is much easier now that we have had the experience of raising our own family. It is easier to see God as a loving father who has set these laws and decrees for us. As parents we set boundaries and rules to help our children grow. It was difficult for them to know why they had to follow rules they didn’t understand. At first the rules seemed burdensome and difficult to follow, but it was only after following the rules and maturing that our children began to see that we acted out of love and care for them, just like God does with us.

These experiences have also given us a new perspective on our own faith development that makes it easier for us to follow rules set by God that we may not yet fully understand. We have a greater trust that our God, as a loving God, wants what is best for us, just like we wanted what was best for our children.

Our nature is to try to understand why we have rules or to challenge them, but what we learn is that rules allow us to become more fully who we ought to be. Like a gardener trims a tree, God issues commands to take away options that could be distracting and take us off course. He trains us to grow in a way that produces the most beautiful shape, allowing us the opportunity to become more fully who He intended us to be.
We have seen this play out in our own life where we have had experiences that we can share as testimony. There were times when we couldn’t see what might happen, or fully understand why it was happening, but ultimately by trusting God, the situation resolved in such a way that it was clear. By sharing these experiences with our family, we hope they feel like they can follow our example and trust even when they don’t understand.

Although there are times we fall short, we know that if we continue to open our hearts, learn and understand, God will be there to guide us. Our own faith journey has taken us from a place where we felt that the rules were very confining and restrictive to a place where we now realize we have more freedom. Within the free will that God gave us, we choose to follow His rules and decrees. The challenge is not complete, however, until we can begin to follow God’s command to love one another as He has loved us, which includes loving our enemies. It is another time that we need to trust that even though it is difficult, He asks no more of us than He was willing to do in His life.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Are we behaving like children, challenging and disobeying the rules, or are we allowing and trusting God through His decrees to guide us to the place where He wants us and created us to be?

Reflection and Question by Mary and Richard Plumb, Parent Relations and Frank R. Seaver College of Science and Engineering
“… stand firm in the Lord …” Philippians 4:1

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; and Luke 9:28-36

LENTEN REFLECTION:

The Transfiguration of Jesus: A Mission to be Accomplished

On this Second Sunday of Lent, the Scriptures invite us to journey up a mountain and to pray with Jesus. While at prayer, the glory and presence of God will be disclosed, as Rabbi Jesus converses with Moses and Elijah. How are we to interpret and understand this revelation concerning Jesus of Nazareth? What might it mean?

Jesus takes three of his disciples—Peter, James and John—up onto a mountain to pray. While Jesus is praying, His face changes in appearance and His clothes become dazzlingly white. Suddenly two men are talking with Jesus—Moses and Elijah. “They appeared in glory and spoke of the passage,” literally in Greek, the exodus, “which He was to fulfill in Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). Jesus is now making His final journey to Jerusalem, and He converses with Moses, who had known the hopelessness of laboring to free a people from the captivity of their own hearts, and with Elijah, who with both sword and spirit had battled with satanic darkness.

While the Scriptures do not report the content of the exchange among Jesus, Moses and Elijah, the three must be considering strategies for the great work of liberation, for the great battle with the forces of darkness in which Jesus is about to engage and where He would embrace the cross out of love for us. God’s definitive project to redeem all peoples is now underway. As heaven’s plan for salvation unfolds, God’s glory transfigures the itinerant rabbi and reveals these heavenly personages. Everything is dazzling with the presence of God. Yet the project that Jesus will accomplish in Jerusalem will be realized in His acceptance of rejection and in His embrace of the cross.

Peter, James and John, privileged witnesses to this showing on a mountaintop, are bathed in its glory, but they do not perceive the personal pain and tremendous horror that Jesus must undergo and which He freely accepts. Consequently, as
Moses and Elijah begin to leave, Peter excitedly says to Jesus: “Master, how good it is for us to be here. Let us set up three booths, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah!” But the evangelist clearly points out to us that Peter “did not really know what he was saying” (Luke 9:33).

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
During these days of Lenten pilgrimage, it is important for us to re-examine the character and motivation of our own Christian discipleship. Why do I follow Jesus? How might I follow Him more faithfully and closely?
A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Let us pray for one another in these days of Lent that we may not take our discipleship too glibly, that we might “stand firm in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1), and embrace the trials of the cross as they are offered.
Let us joyfully and “eagerly await the coming of our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” who “will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his gloried body” (Philippians 3:20-21). For we ask this in His Holy Name, Jesus, our brother and our Lord. Amen.

Reflection, Questions and Prayer by
Rev. Robert Scholla, S.J.
“Help us, O God of your salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us and forgive our sins, for thy name’s sake.” Psalm 79:9

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Daniel 9:4-10; Psalm 79; and Luke 6:36-38

A LENTEN PRAYER:
God, You have given me the gift of free will, this ability to choose the decisions I make in life. Dear Lord, I ask for Your strength and wisdom in choosing what brings me closer to You and Your everlasting kingdom. With Your endless love and compassion, as evident in Your creation, I pray that I make the decisions to make the world a better place. Though I am granted this ability to choose what is right dear Lord, that does not mean I am free from sin. For this reason God, I confess to You and ask for Your forgiveness for all that I have done that leads me away from You. I ask for Your unending love, support and strength to stay away from what is wrong so I can promote justice, faith and love here in Your kingdom on earth. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Do you ever stray from God? What brings you back to God’s unyielding love? Remember what brings you back to God in those trying times.

Prayer and Questions by Keyon Mitchell ’10
“All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.” Matthew 23:12

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50; and Matthew 23:1-12

A LENTEN PRAYER:
Please Lord help me to remember to live out my faith through actions and not just words.
Let me do service to obey your will and not for the admiration of others.
Help me to be humble and compassionate to those in need rather than judgmental.
I pray that I may seek Your love rather than glory and fame and live as Your humble servant.
Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What motivates my actions? Is it my desire to be recognized by my peers? Or is my motivation to carry out God’s love?

Prayer and Questions by Christine Nangle, Campus Ministry
Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink? Matthew 20:22

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31; and Matthew 20:17-28

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Here we see Jesus’ true love and sacrifice for us. Jesus says His disciples must drink the cup that He will drink if they expect to reign with Him in His kingdom. This cup is one of suffering, struggles, temptations, disappointments and martyrdom. If we are to act as disciples of Jesus, we must be willing to act as martyrs in making the necessary sacrifices in our lives. This could be accomplished by learning to recognize those in our community who need help. Oftentimes, people are only in need of a friend or a hug, but other times they need more help and assistance. Through simple acts of helping those around us and going out of our way to do the right thing or by seeking out those in need of great assistance and helping them in whatever way we can, we are able to lay down our lives in sacrifice for one another. Through this humble service of laying down our lives for one another, we are able to share in the reign of God, because this is what Jesus did. We are following His example in how we live. We must remember what Jesus says in Matthew 20:26-27: “Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your slave; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve.” By laying down our lives in service, we grow closer to Jesus, because He laid down His life in service. We are also able to grow closer to others and to ourselves because service lends itself toward self-reflection, and through this reflection, we are able to remember the importance of serving others, instead of seeking to be served.

QUESTION AND A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
In what ways or aspects of your being are you able to lay down your life to serve others? Lord Jesus, fill me with love so that I may be a servant of Your kingdom. Instead of seeking to be served, help me to serve others. Ignite the love in my heart, so that I may give generously and serve joyfully for Your sake.
Amen.

Reflection, Question and Prayer by Lisa Sequiera ’11
More torturous than all else is the human heart, beyond remedy; who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass:
Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1; and
Luke 16:19-31

A LENTEN PRAYER:
O God, since the beginning of creation You did not leave us to fend for ourselves.

Though we are rebellious beings, ready to walk away from You because of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, You, in Your great mercy, have given us everlasting life through Your precious Son, Jesus. His death on the cross and resurrected life guarantee us an inheritance along with Your Son in the heavenly realms, a Kingdom that is greater than all that will ever exist.

Jesus, You humbled Yourself and took the form of a human man, lived the perfect life and left us Your Holy Spirit for guidance and comfort. Pour on me Rivers of Living Water, that I may be an oak of righteousness in this wicked and depraved world. That I may be a tree planted by the riverbank with its roots reaching deep into the soil drawing water from Your Spirit, for You are a deep well of goodness, righteousness, peace and mercy.

Father, create in me a broken and contrite spirit. Create in me a spirit that begs for Your
presence as Lazarus, the beggar. O Father, keep me from willful sins as the rich man who would not feed, clothe or assist the beggar. That I may not sin against You, but be delivered from the wickedness of my heart. Father, I praise You with all that is within me and will not forget all Your benefits. I long to hear from You that I am a blessed person as I seek the counsel of the righteous and flee from the counsel of the wicked. Renew in me a steadfast spirit, standing for Your Holy Name. May my obedience to Your Word follow a sacrifice of praise before the Throne of Grace. “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14).

Amen.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What can I do to allow this Lenten season to bring me closer to God?

Prayer and Question by
Bessie Coronado ’10
The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes. Matthew 21:42

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28; Psalm 105; and Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

A LENTEN PRAYER:
You are a sacred piece of the Lord’s architecture;
Chiseled and crafted by God’s hand.
The creation of your life;
The cornerstone of an even greater design.
This stone, imprinted with the dates of your human life;
Is the beginning of a structure left to your creation.
You choose the foundation,
The concept,
The materials,
The workers.
This blessed responsibility entrusted to your human hands.
Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Who or what is the foundation of your life, and what are you building upon that foundation? Is there any part of this that you would like to prayerfully redesign?

Prayer and Questions by Lindy Wynne, Campus Ministry
Bless the Lord, my soul; do not forget all the gifts of God. Psalm 103:2

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103; and Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

LENTEN REFLECTION:
We are taught in school, sports and throughout life to be self-sufficient individuals and to control our own fate. We are taught to take charge and manage our lives, but many of us forget about an important factor in our lives, our faith. It is easy to put the pressures of life on our own shoulders rather than stop and realize the Lord should be guiding our journey through life. With the fast-paced nature of our world and the idea that money means success, it is all too simple to be led down a different path than the Lord and lose sight of our faith. We use our God-given talents to achieve what society wants from us rather than what God wants from us. For many, it is easier to take this path than follow the Lord’s path that is meant for us. With money, image and success reigning over our society, it is easy to see those ideals as a means to living a happy life, rather than living through faith and God’s will.

During this Lenten season, it is time to see God’s presence in our lives and to see that His gifts and compassion dictate our experiences. Despite our faults and setbacks, God is there to lead us on our paths, not punish us for our sins. His mercy and compassion are endless, and we are loved regardless of our wrongdoings, as our faith will always be enough to bring us back to the Lord. Though it is difficult to step back from the rigid plan we have for our lives and allow the Lord to guide our daily decisions, giving Him the reins will bring us to our rightful path. Embracing God’s plan and blindly following our faith is a challenge, but it will have the greatest outcome. We need to allow the Lord to be our shepherd and lead us to our destiny, for in the end His rewards will be much greater than any monetary gains or status in our lives. Today, take the time to think about who controls your life; and if the Lord is absent from your journey, let Him begin to take control.
QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What can I let go of and change in my own life that will allow me to become closer to God and live His will during this Lenten season?

Reflection and Question by Maddy Gridley ’11
“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” Psalm 103:8


LENTEN REFLECTION:
God has a tendency to reverse our expectations. Although we may feel fairly comfortable in our perception of the ways of the Lord, and although we know, theoretically, that God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8), we may be surprised and sometimes taken aback when God reveals Himself as He is.

In today’s Gospel, for example, Jesus’ listeners must have been embarrassed when Jesus failed to comply with their opinion of the Galileans who suffered at the hands of Pilate. They were expecting a condemnation of others, not a warning for themselves.

“Unless you repent, you will perish as they did” sounds threatening. Severe as the words may be, however, they are issued with love. Immediately they are counterbalanced by the parable of the fig tree that bore no fruit for three years. Instead of chopping the barren tree down, as the owner suggests, the kindly gardener pleads for one more year during which he will dig around it and fertilize it. Perhaps then, he says, the tree will bear fruit.

In this parable, Jesus reveals a patient
and forgiving God. The supposed ultimatum has an escape clause. Even if the tree has been barren, it will not be cut down, for it has been given an extension. With appropriate work and care the tree may become fruitful.

Lent is the promised extension of time, that extra “year”—an ideal opportunity for repenting past mistakes. But it is also the moment to consider the present, to determine how to produce fruit—now, while there is still time.

How are we to bring forth fruit? Perhaps we can reflect on the portrait of God in today’s liturgy. God is a God who is patient and gives second chances, a God who has heard the cry of His people in Egypt and comes to deliver them from their oppressors (Exodus 3:1-15). “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Psalm. 103:8). We are called to be like God.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What are the changes in my attitudes and relationships that our loving God would like to find in me this Lent?

Reflection and Question by Sr. Frances Gussenhooven, R.S.H.M.
“Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash and be clean!’” 2 Kings 5:13

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: 2 Kings 5:1-15; Psalm 42; and Luke 4:24-30

A LENTEN PRAYER:
Dear Lord,
Help me to not overcomplicate what is truly needed,
Help me to know Your love once more,
Help me to not hold myself back from Your love,
For so often I do,
And I know I will again;
I long and I thirst for Your love,
Sometimes feeling alone,
I find myself looking hard for a “sign,”
Some greater kind of forgiveness,
Not knowing if it exists;
Yet You are already here,
Forgiving me simply and quickly,
In an almost foolish way;
As I sit here struggling to find You,
I realize that I hold myself back from You,
You have been here at my side constantly waiting for me to look into Your loving eyes;
I was afraid to see that love,
Please help me to allow You to love me,
And to allow me to love and forgive myself,
I want to simply “wash and be clean.”
Live in my heart until the end of my days.
Amen.
Monday of the Third Week of Lent
MARCH 8, 2010

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Do I hold myself back from God’s unconditional love? How during this Lenten season can I allow myself to simplify it all and see His face?

Prayer and Questions by Natalia Ceniseroz ’10
Make known to me your ways, LORD; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. For you I wait all the long day, because of your goodness, LORD. Psalm 25:4-5

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25; and Matthew 18:21-35

LENTEN REFLECTION:
As we reflect and prepare ourselves during this Lenten season, we must remember many of the qualities that God calls us to possess. As we welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, we must also welcome Him and others back into our hearts. Throughout the year we all go through situations in which we must forgive and ask for forgiveness. Although it might seem difficult at times, we ought to call on God and our loved ones to give us the strength to show mercy toward others. If everyone treated people the way that they would like to be treated, the world would be a much better place.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Is it cliché for a reason: What would Jesus do?

Reflection and Question by Natalie Ferrerosa ’12
Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147; and Matthew 5:17-19
LENTEN REFLECTION:
Rules, laws, regulations—these words don’t ring particularly well to most people, because most people think immediately of the implicit don’ts, can’ts and shan’ts that come along with them. There’s also the issue of punishment: Break the rules, and there will be consequences. In many cases, we’ve come to think of rules as restrictive and nothing more; we forget that regulations and laws are there to (hopefully) affirm human flourishing.

Our faith is no exception. In Deuteronomy, God doesn’t ask the Israelites to follow His laws simply for the sake of following them. God points out to them that the laws are what set them apart as His people—not only culturally, and not only because of what the laws require, but because the laws fosters a true relationship between God and the Israelites, one where God will come to them when they call. Psalm 147 echoes this: It is through the law that God is glorified. And it is through the glorification of God that we fully become who we are called to be, and so it’s clear that God’s laws are much more than a simple list of prohibitions.

And that’s what Jesus gets at in Matthew 5. He hasn’t come to get rid of the laws—they’re still necessary—but He has come to fulfill them, to inject them with a greater meaning than the world has ever known. He’s the most potent reminder ever of why we are called to view God’s laws, rules and regulations as something more: as that which affirms us, not that which restricts us. It’s not easy, but perhaps this Lenten season is the best time to first, remember that, and second, embrace it in a spirit of sacrifice. God has given us this law of love so that we can enter into a meaningful relationship with Him and, as a result, with those around us. Then God sent Jesus Christ to not only remind us of this, but to suffer, die and rise that we may continue on this path toward flourishing in God. This Lent, it’s in a spirit of gratefulness and perseverance that we remember this.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How can I view the season of Lent, with its emphasis on self-sacrifice (e.g., fasting), as a season of growth, rather than a season of restrictions?

Reflection and Question by Jose Martinez ’11
For this is our God, whose people we are, God’s well-tended flock. Oh, that today you would hear his voice. Psalm 95:7

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95; and Luke 11:14-23

LENTEN REFLECTION:
That today we would hear God’s voice. Calling to us from every moment, every situation, every reality in our personal lives, every reality in our world.

Today’s readings tell the story of our ancestors, the chosen people of God in the Old Testament, who refused to listen to His voice, who repeatedly rejected the prophets. The readings of the day tell the story of those who witnessed Jesus’ great works and still refused to engage in hearing His voice and following His radical way.

We must learn to silence the many voices around us if we are to listen to the swift and powerful voice of God that lies deeper within us and within all else. Listening to this voice will help us walk in righteousness and attain peace. Let us pray this Lent that we will hear God’s voice and follow Him, working to build the Kingdom of God through the service of others.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How do you take time each day to listen to your inner voice? How do you take time each day to listen to God’s voice? What voices out there distract you from hearing God’s voice?

Reflection and Questions by Carlos Rodriguez ’11
“Nor we will say again, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands” Hosea 14:3

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81; and Mark 12:28-34

LENTEN REFLECTION:
“What does God want from me?” A simple question asked and answered in today’s readings: “To love God and to be loved by God.” In Mark, Jesus clearly tells us that what God asks of us is to love God with all of our being. Both Hosea
and Psalm 81 offer a rich description of God’s love, using images from nature and human experience. We strive to imagine the wonderful offerings of love from a perfect God.

Yet, we spend time trying to create our own gods rather than learning to love and be loved by God. Throughout today’s readings, God calls us away from our creation of false gods—not for God’s benefit, but for our own. Even the best god we create can only hurt us when we divert our focus from our true God. This became clear to me recently when my 4-year-old daughter learned about “wishing on a star.” At one level I was touched as I watched her give whispered voice to the dreams she held while reverently wishing on a 747 en route to LAX. Her earnest belief that it was her responsibility to determine what she needed, wish on the correct star and follow up with all the correct behaviors was so overwhelming to her that she did not sleep that night. In the wee hours of a sleepless night, I explained to my sweet girl that wishes don’t work that way, not all wishes should come true, and wishes are not made true by our own actions relating to the night sky. As it happens, her particular wish did not come true. She did not have it all under control—that deal worked out between her and her “star” fell through.

How could she think that wishing on a star would work? I see a bit of myself in her. Often I turn to the wrong source of help, assurance or comfort. If only I work harder, connect with the right people, get that next promotion, then life will be good. Rather than allowing God to be my God, I create a god of promised success and accomplishment. In trying so hard, I risk missing the wonderful gifts that may just be waiting, the finest wheat and honey that God promised us if only we can see what He offers.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How can I open my heart and make space in my life for the love that God offers?

Reflection and Question by Professor Cathleen McGrath, Department of Management
“For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” Luke 18:14

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51; and Luke 18:9-14

LENTEN REFLECTION:
In our readings today, Jesus tells a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector. The Pharisee prays, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers or even this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.” The tax collector beats his breast and prays, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

It is easy to think that the message of this parable is “don’t be like that Pharisee.” But, if we say that or believe that, we are no different than the Pharisee after all. Perhaps we really are not so different. We should remember that Pharisees were not bad people. They were good, righteous people who followed the law and Scriptures. They saw themselves as obedient to God’s command and did all they could to act rightly. Isn’t that what we try to do today?

But God does not call us just to be good people. He doesn’t want us to count our deeds like some holy income for our own benefit. He doesn’t want our practices to become themselves a distraction. He wants more. He wants us to know who we truly are. We are God’s. We are loved. We are beloved sinners. He wants us to depend on Him. And with a deep grounding of our identity rooted in God, we can go and follow Him. We are not called just to be good people; we are called to be followers of Christ.

The tax collector showed great humility in his prayer. Humility recognizes that everything we have is a gift. It recognizes that who we are is rooted in God and in love. Humility strengthens us to be instruments of God’s light, justice and peace, all the while knowing that God is the source of all that is good. It lets us know that God is first. Just as the full moon has no light of its own, but rather reflects the light of the sun onto the earth, we too are called to shine the light of Christ to all. It is not our own light that we shine, but God’s light through us.
A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
God, help me not to be blind to myself, but to see myself with Your eyes. Help me to humble myself and allow the space for You to work and love others through me. Amen.

Reflection and Prayer by Jessica Vega ’10


“While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 34; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; and Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

LENTEN REFLECTION:
The reading from the book of Joshua tells of God’s fidelity and care in providing for the people from the produce of the land. Psalm 34:10 reminds us to look to God, and if, for some reason, we have turned away, we can come back and find the peace of God again, for “those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.” In the second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul proclaims that “Whoever is in Christ is a new creation,” that we have been reconciled to God through Christ. And finally, in the Gospel of Luke, we read of the prodigal son who ran away to satisfy his hungers only to realize that he could find all that he desired by returning home to his father.

As a child, I remember coming home after school and finding my mom there in the kitchen. She worked at our school during the day, but she was always there for us when we got home, with a ready and welcoming embrace. I realize now how much that meant to all of us kids to know that she was always there. Perhaps that is why it is so natural for me today to believe that God is always present and waiting for me, and whenever I come is the right time. As I got older, my mom was still there for me when I came home at night from work or outings with friends. She would sit in the living room awaiting my arrival, ready to chat and welcome me home. Now, she waits in heaven for my return home, and I know she will be there to greet me when I arrive.

The prodigal son/father story calls to mind these warm memories as I reflect on the dynamic between this father and his two sons. God is always there for us, whether we have gone far away or are close at hand. So too, we could be very far away or very close at hand and still be in need of some kind of “return.” We could be nearby and still very distant in some way. Where am I in my relationship with God at this time? Am I lost or on my way home, or close by but very distant? Wherever
or however I find myself, like the son who ran away or the jealous brother who never left, God invites me into a deeper relationship, a kind of return or “coming home” experience. We are reminded by this wonderful parable that God is like the welcoming father/mother, always waiting for us, all-embracing and forgiving, offering us all we need, with an unconditional love that we can hardly imagine. Let us celebrate and rejoice! Welcome home!

A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Thank you, Compassionate God, for always being there for me. Your tender mercies have set me free to love and forgive others. Please help me to be ready to forgive those who may have offended me. May I also have the courage to go to others I may have offended and seek their pardon. Help me to understand that Your compassion is for everyone, for Your love cannot be outdone! Thank you, Merciful One, for teaching us how to forgive ourselves and one another, so to be prophets of peace, ambassadors of reconciliation, in our world so broken and in need of healing. Thank you for welcoming us home. Amen.

Reflection and Prayer by Sr. Joanna Carroll, C.S.J.
Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent
MARCH 15, 2010

At dusk weeping comes for the night; but at dawn there is rejoicing.
Psalm 30:6

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30; and John 4:43-54

A LENTEN PRAYER:
Lord, give me the grace to know that You are with me.
In times of distress, aid me with loving care.
When I am filled with fatigue, restore my strength.
When life falls apart, help me start anew.
Help me understand Your presence in my life,
Let me see You in moments of silence and song.
Let me trust You in times of suffering and serenity.
With the new life of Your peace,
Guide my heart more deeply into Your love.
Amen.

Prayer by Hannah Sheehan ’12
"Rise, take up your mat, and walk." John 5:8

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46; and John 5:1-16

LENTEN REFLECTION:
The readings for today speak loudly of the life God brings his children. Jesus heals, water flows from the temple refreshing the land, and amid turmoil and destruction here on earth, God, our stronghold, brings life. Even when society’s ideas contradict, as with the Pharisee’s understanding of the Sabbath—God brings life. Even when our hearts seem completely dry, fruitless, deserted—God brings life. Even after 38 years of incurable pain and sickness—God brings life. Like the waters that flow from the threshold of the temple, God’s life is unstoppable and uncontainable.

In his mission to bring life, Jesus speaks two obnoxiously simple yet frustratingly difficult phrases to the man seated near the healing pool. He asks, “Do you want to be healed?” Sick for almost 38 years, the man wants almost nothing else. In fact, he has tried many times to seek, as was prescribed, healing in the Jerusalem pool. Jesus simply responds, “Rise [then], take up your mat, and walk.” Without complaint or contradiction, the man does just that.

Amid the chaos of our lives and our world, God desires to be our anchor and our sustenance, pouring forth a superabundance of life. Our opportunity to respond comes just as with the sick man by the pool. Jesus lovingly invites us to cast aside some part of our lives that prevents us from walking closer with and rejoicing more fully in God’s presence.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Is God inviting me to leave behind some weight, some worry/fear/grudge/pain I have carried for weeks, months, years even, so that I might walk closer to Him? How can I respond like the man at the pool?

If, like Jesus to the sick man, the unlooked-for voice of God speaks sudden clarity and healing to me, do I have the courage to give up my way and rise, pick up my mat, and walk?
A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
May we, in this Lenten season, imitate the sick man’s simple but life-affirming response to Christ’s invitation.
Amen.

Reflection, Questions and Prayer by Jim Schaffer ’10
Jesus answered and said to them: “Amen, amen, I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing, for what he does, his son will do also.” John 5:19

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalm 145; and John 5:17-30

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Christ used the proverb above to illustrate His relationship with God the Father. The requirements of Jewish Law regarding the Sabbath and matters of judgment do not apply to God. God does not rest on the Sabbath; He can give life and He can make judgments on any matter. And so can Christ, pointing out His relationship with God the Father, a difficult concept for His followers to accept and understand, “for what He does, His Son will do also.”

Our dilemma as God’s children, as brothers and sisters of Christ, is truly doing in our lives what Christ did in His. In His life, Christ demonstrated for us how God wants us to live.

We read His life in the Gospels. We try to live as He lived. He is our model. Before Vatican II there was a famous, very religious book called “The Imitation of Christ” read in monasteries and convents around the world, inspiring many to try to live as Christ lived, as the Father asked Him to live.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Can we today, read the Gospel stories and glean how to imitate Christ’s life and carry forth His message of love? Can we, during this Lenten period, model our preparation for Good Friday and Easter Sunday on Christ’s preparation? Can we approach our Good Friday in the way Christ did, speaking to His Father: “Almighty Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me but not what I will, but what you will.”

Reflection and Questions by Rev. Albert Koppes, O. Carm.
If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. John 5:31

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 106; and John 5:31-47

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Reflection upon the celebration of the birth of our Lord is often easy for us. We are constantly reminded that the “season” is upon us, and we are told we should be generous, joyful and thankful. But what about other times of the year when our faith is challenged?

In the midst of living lives that are full of distractions and busy schedules, taking the time to worship and thank God is not always easy. Yet, the Lenten season is a time when flocks return to the church to celebrate God’s love for us through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. In this season, we can take these readings to keep focused on our faith. Looking past daily distractions, we can focus on God’s glorious works and unending love.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How many times a day do you react quickly and without love? How can you ask for God’s grace to give you the patience to show you that the path to everlasting life is with Him; to seek the realization of your intangible faith in Him; to remind you that His love for you is everlasting; and to understand that the humbling of yourself is not through others but through Him.

A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Father, please give me the strength to keep Your faith within me, the passion to love You unconditionally and the comfort of Your omnipresence. I seek testimony only from You; I am humbled to be Your servant. Thank you for all that You have given me.
Amen.

Reflection, Questions and Prayer by Al Tipon, Facilities Management
“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had directed him.” Matthew 1:24

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Psalm 89; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; and Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Joseph had plans. He was a carpenter, a builder, an architect. Attentive to the invisible, he could see the potential for beauty in an ordinary piece of wood. He could imagine what a building would look like before he began his labors. He knew the value of dreams, for he had many related to his fiancée and to their future life together. His was a bright, even prosperous future, if all went according to plan.
And then God stepped in. It seems that plans would change; his life would not be what he had anticipated. In a split second, Joseph was invited to listen, to enter into a far bigger plan and to play a far more significant role than he had ever imagined. His “yes” would be essential for God’s dream to come true.

When Joseph awoke, he acted immediately. The artisan, the dreamer, the builder: the very same gifts that Joseph brought to his life as an ordinary carpenter became the extraordinary gifts needed to follow the voice of the angel.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What are my plans for my life? How has the Holy Spirit been speaking to me during this Lenten season? Where might I use my gifts today to help bring God’s dream to birth?

Reflection and Questions by
Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J.
“O Lord of hosts, O just Judge, searcher of mind and heart … to you I have entrusted my cause.” Jeremiah 11:20

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7; and John 7:40-53

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Sometimes it seems like God is nowhere to be found. As Jeremiah and the psalmist both express in these passages, it’s difficult to understand how or why our “enemies” can be permitted to get so close to destroying us or succeed in causing us some sort of harm. In moments like these, it’s easy to feel as though God has utterly and completely abandoned you and left you to fend for yourself. I used to think the appropriate response in times like these was to keep quiet and refrain from telling God how you really feel because it would be difficult to say anything nice to Him. Yet I have come to discover in times when I felt especially distant from God that it’s okay to express how I feel to Him, even when all I felt like doing was asking a bunch of questions, most urgently “Hellooooo?!! Are you still there, Jesus? Do You see this?” Jesus, of all people, understood this feeling. And on top of it all, He knew how bad it would get beforehand. Just as Jesus knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane and spoke to His Father from the heart about how He really felt about His impending fate, God wants us to know that we can come to Him and talk to Him—even when we feel less than ideal about the current situation. It’s easy to forget about God altogether or get mad at Him during difficult times when things don’t go the way that seems fair or the way we planned. That is just human nature. Yet the point God is often trying to make is that He is always with us no matter what, and that He is more than capable of turning a bad situation around and bringing a blessing from it that we never saw coming. But we will never know that side of Him if we don’t stick with Him long enough for Him to demonstrate that power. It’s not necessarily the case that when we call He will answer right away. That’s what’s annoying at times, especially when life is not fair. But He is still trustworthy, even when life isn’t.
A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

Father,
In Your most precious Name,
Let me never forget Your power, Your steadfast hand
Let me never forget Your Righteousness,
For You are not only a loving God, but also a Just Judge
And Your judgment far exceeds my own
Lord, even in times that don’t make sense,
When the innocent die all around us
And the wicked seem to prosper,
When people plot against our very lives and threaten us
May our faith in You never cease,
Fade as it may at times. May we cling to Your unchanging hand
And refuse to let go. Lord keep us from being moved so easily
By what we see. For that is the opposite of faith.
Daddy, help us to remember that Your timing is best
Help us remember that You always show up and come through for us—
perhaps not exactly when we want You to, but You’re always on time.
Your eyes see all that is done on this earth
And You will surely act accordingly
And so Lord, for that we thank You
It is You that has carried us this far, whether we’re aware of You or not
It is in You I place my trust
And I know that You will never betray it
Like Jeremiah, I have committed my case and my cause to You,
With faith in Your limitless power and unconditional love
Because of You, I need not fear
Even when everything around me prompts me to
Yet You will surely be my shield and guide
You will surely carry me through.
So thank You in advance,

—Your Daughter

Reflection and Prayer by Ohemaah Ntiamoah ’10
“See, I am doing something NEW! Now it springs, do you not perceive it?”
Isaiah 43:19

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126;
Philippians 3:4b-14; and John 8:1-11

LENTEN REFLECTION:
God’s constant care as summed up in the Isaiah story continues to be repeated throughout our lives. We are constantly invited to something new if we are open to the risk. I am reminded of my good friend who was without work for two years. His deep faith during adversity amazed me. He often said, “I trust that God is making something new.” God did, and my friend is now in a job that is more satisfying, less stressful and more lucrative.

Change, especially when it is forced upon us rather than chosen, is rarely welcomed. We may feel rejected and resist the very things that could eventually be life-giving. We so desperately want to hold on to the way things used to be that we miss the gifts to be found in the present moment.

A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Gracious God, give us eyes to see and notice the many ways You gift us and spring forth new life within us.
Amen.

Reflection and Prayer by Sr. Joanne Connolly, S.S.L.
“Whoever follows me … will have the light of life.” John 8:12

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Psalm 23; and John 8:12-20

LENTEN REFLECTION:
As we begin this fifth week of our Lenten journey, we take a moment to step back to reflect upon our Lenten practices. We have more intentionally strived these past few weeks to dedicate a few moments of our busy days to God. We may have spent a few moments every day reading Scripture, praying, using these reflections, fasting, doing some act of daily service or finding a meaningful Lenten preparation. In the challenging words of today’s Gospel reading, we are reminded that we commit to following Christ and walking the walk of these Lenten practices so that we will walk in the light of life in our daily lives. Yes, Christ came in the name of His Father as exemplified and testified by His loving works. We are reminded today that the essence of our Lenten observances and of our Christian faith is to exemplify the love of God and to be a sign of Christ’s light in the world.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How am I walking in the light of life today? How am I striving to exemplify the love of God in and through me today?

A PRAYER FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Loving God, help me to be a sign of Your love in the world today. Help me to follow Christ more nearly, love You more dearly and exemplify the light of life in all that I do today.
Amen.

Reflection, Questions and Prayer by Marty Roers, Campus Ministry and Resident Ministry
**Turn your ear to me. When I call, answer me quickly. Psalm 102:2**

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102; and John 8:21-30

**LENTEN REFLECTION:**

Answer when I call!

Can you imagine what the psalmist was thinking when the words above, from Psalm 102, were written? If you put similar words in the context of an impetuous schoolchild speaking to his teacher or an impatient daughter calling for her mother, the words make the mind jump defensively. I can hear my schoolteacher friends telling me, “This child needs to be taught a lesson!”

Lucky for us, God’s patience is immeasurable. One lesson God wants to teach us is about the unconditional love God has for us. If we have a need, God is there for us. If we don’t even know what we need, God wants to generously help us figure it out for ourselves. In our busy lives, with our many pressing needs, it’s difficult to imagine this holy Other who is always ready for us to call and always ready to respond to us with love. Beyond our wildest imagination, God is ready to care for each one of us in ways that we don’t even expect.

This Lent, let’s not be afraid to ask the Lord for what we need. Let’s have the audacity of the psalmist to not only call on the Lord but to ask God to hurry up and answer us! Let’s have the courage to ask for God’s providence and the wisdom to accept God’s love. And let’s do that quickly!

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:**

What is one thing I need to ask God’s help with today? Am I willing to ask for God’s help and am I ready to accept the help that God provides?

Reflection and Questions by Dino Entac, Resident Ministry
If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples. John 8:31

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Daniel 3:52-56; and John 8:31-42

LENTEN REFLECTION:
It can be difficult at times, especially in this day and age, for us to focus on God. There are many distractions that point us in the wrong direction. One such interruption is technology. Although it has allowed us to take three steps forward, it has also brought us five steps backward. We may become obsessed with our cell phones, video games or television shows and lose sight of what is truly
important. While televisions are becoming much more clear, our view of God may become blurrier. But isn’t that what distractions accomplish? They lead us away from what we ultimately seek. The three disciples in our first reading of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, knew very well of the distractions of their time yet persevered with faith. The three were pushed to follow the distraction of King Nebuchadnezzar by worshipping his idol, but were not persuaded. They were thrown in the fire but did not burn because God’s love shielded them. The disciples’ faith in God was clear, not obstructed. Their faith saved them. This Lenten season we are prompted to re-examine our relationship with God and focus on the distractions that lead us away from Him. And just like the three disciples, we are called to be people of God at all times, even in the face of danger.

In the reading from the Gospel of John, Jesus tells those who believe in Him that if they keep His words, His words of love and righteousness, they will truly be His disciples. During this season of Lent we are encouraged to pray more, to practice almsgiving and to fast. It is a time to look within ourselves to see how we can become more like Jesus. We are to pray as Jesus did, to give ourselves to others as Jesus did, and to sacrifice ourselves for others as Jesus did for each one of us. But it is not enough to remain in His words. We must become advocates for those words that produce action. Let Jesus’ words be the key to our ignition of action. During this season of Lent let us open the door to improvement and Jesus’ teachings and close the door to our shortcomings and vices.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Our lives are full of distractions. During this Lenten season, what is one example of a distraction that pulls you away from God? How will you improve this?

Reflection and Questions by Justin Aquino ’12
Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word. Luke 1:38

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10; Psalm 40; Hebrews 10:4-10; and Luke 1:26-38

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Sister Peg Dolan was a longtime campus minister, alumni chaplain and a major figure here on our LMU campus. The gospel today was one of her favorite readings. It was the foundation of her devotion to “Our Lady of Yes.”

It is an amazing story, when you think about it. The young girl Mary has not gone to live with her new husband Joseph, and yet she is with child. She has not had relations, so how is this possible? We can only imagine how confused and scared she was.

In the midst of all this, she has the experience of an angel—of the divine presence, a messenger of God. The angel tells her that she is very special in His eyes. Indeed, she and her child have a unique place in history and in God’s plan of salvation.

How does Mary respond to this overwhelming news? She says simply,
“I am the servant of the Lord, be it done to me as you say.” In other words, Mary says yes to God. She does not know how all this came to be. She does not know what the future holds and how all this will turn out. But she trusts. She trusts in her experience of God, in the word of God come to her through the angel and in the goodness of God, which has been revealed to her through the Hebrew Scriptures and the great tradition of her faith.

Here is Mary’s wholehearted yes to God. She faces the mystery of her life, as we all do. She is worried and concerned and confused. Yet there is a deep-down trust that the providence of God is truly active here. Somehow, God’s plan is and will be worked out in all this.

That plan begins to come to fruition nine months from today on December 25 when Jesus, foretold by the angel, is born in Bethlehem.

Like Mary, we are called to trust God. Like Mary, very often our lives may seem confusing, and we do not know where we are going. But like Mary, our faith invites us to say yes—yes to the possibility, yes to the future. Like Mary, our faith, our trust and our yes can make a huge difference in our own lives and in the world.

**QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:**
In the mystery of my own life, how is God inviting me to say yes?

Reflection and Question by Rev. James D. Erps, S.J.
“I love you, Lord, my strength.” Psalm 18:2

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18:2-7; and John 10:31-42

LENTEN REFLECTION:
All three readings for today look to the Lord as a source of justice, vindication and strength. In the passage from the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, Jeremiah addresses the Lord: “You who test the just [and] probe the mind and the heart” (Jeremiah 20:12) and then focuses his praise on a special kind of vindication: “Sing to the Lord … [who] has rescued the life of the poor” (Jeremiah 20:13). The New Testament passage, which follows the story of the Good Shepherd in John’s Gospel, depicts a moment when Christ faces ridicule and barely escapes arrest. As the episode ends, however, with Jesus’ going back across the Jordan, we are told, “Many came to him … and many there began to believe in him.”

Psalm 18—the reading that falls between Jeremiah and John—serves as a poetic bridge, marking a rescue from alienation and doubt to vindication. The psalm, sung by David after a military victory, can perhaps be read as a broader affirmation of the experience of God’s grace: “From his temple, he heard my voice, my cry to him reached his ears.” The passage illustrates the restorative power of the Psalms—what Thomas Merton has called “Bread in the Wilderness.” It is perhaps not surprising that Dorothy Day, imprisoned for her protest against the Vietnam War, found in the Psalms, which she read daily, a source of sustenance and renewal.

Psalm 18 has shaped and inspired hymns and lyrics. Its language resonates with those who have felt alienated, marginalized or alone; with those who seek to center or perhaps redirect their lives. The relational focus of the Psalm resonates for me and finds a practical application in this passage from Kathleen Norris’ recent book, Acedia and Me: “Perform the humblest tasks with full attention and no fussing over the whys and wherefores; remember that in beginning a new task you are susceptible to being distracted from your purpose … To dwell in this desert and make it bloom requires that we … struggle to know ourselves as we are.”
When typed into Google, the assertion, “I love you, Lord, my strength,” has more than one million references.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
What does it mean “to dwell in the desert and make it bloom?”

In *Thoughts In Solitude*, Thomas Merton writes, “As soon as you are really alone, you are with God.” Do you agree?

Reflection and Questions by Professor Barbara Rico, Department of English
“My dwelling shall be with them: I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Ezekiel 37:26-27.

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10-13; and John 11:45-57

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Recently I presented a workshop to a parish community on Catholic Social Teaching (CST), and when the issue of immigration was raised someone asked, “So, we are supposed to be OK with those people coming here and taking our jobs and living in our houses?” I responded by stressing that in CST honoring the dignity of the human person is a foundational principle. This principle reminds us that all people should be treated with respect because all are made in the image and likeness of God. I emphasized that God dwells within every human person because God promises to dwell among all people forever.

The respect that is due to each person includes access to having basic human rights met; these include the right to work, health care, food, clothing and a decent
dwelling place. The dignity of the human person, our neighbor, is sacred regardless of why that person is in the United States, and we should treat every individual accordingly. We should welcome those who come to the United States looking for a new start and allow each the opportunity to live a full and satisfying life. At the workshop I quoted a recent statement from Pope Benedict XVI: “Love of God and Love of Neighbor have become one.”

At the conclusion of my presentation, I suggested to my questioner that he should share a meal with an immigrant as an opportunity to listen to that person’s story. I emphasized that his opinion of the “other” would likely be altered if he were able to hear the tale of someone who undoubtedly risked a great deal in order to dwell here in this country. The other can no longer be a stranger if we listen to the story of his or her life’s journey.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How can we continually challenge ourselves to recognize and value the God who dwells in all people? How can we ensure that all people have the right to dwell where they desire? When we listen to another’s sacred and holy story, do we see that in many respects it is not all that different from our own?

Reflection and Questions by Tom King, Center for Service and Action and Resident Ministry
Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Luke 23:34

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2:6-11; and Luke 22:14-23:56

LENTEN REFLECTION:
Oddly, it’s difficult to write a reflection on Christ’s passion. The problem is that the narrative is so rich. Each of us is invited to enter into it wherever we are in our life at the time. That can differ from person to person and from season to season. So enter into the story yourself and feel free to ignore what follows!

One of the great human passions is the passion to become oneself. It is a “passion” in two senses: we intensely yearn to become who we are uniquely called to be, but that becoming usually also involves suffering, since it is so often much easier to let someone else write the script for our lives. We can let either authority figures (parents, professors, “advertisers”) or peers do the writing. Becoming oneself is risky and involves negotiating—and at times disappointing—the expectations of others.

As we go through this long process of becoming ourselves, we can turn to Christ in prayer. Christ was misunderstood by both the religious and the civil authorities, by the public and by His closest friends. Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, the soldiers mocked Him, the crowd chose Barabbas. It would have been easy for Christ not to be true to Himself. Indeed, part of Him might have preferred that: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but your will be done.” Yet Christ remained true to His calling.

Becoming who He was to be did not make Christ a cold and distant figure. His sufferings did not harden or embitter Him: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” His own struggles helped Him to understand the struggles of others and to love the people in His life, whether He knew them well or not.

As each of us tries to become ourselves, amidst many expectations for us, we can turn to Christ, the Christ who loves us and understands our passions, our yearnings and our sufferings.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Do I find becoming myself easy or difficult? Do I feel strongly the expectations of others? Do I have people in my life who accept me for who I am and am becoming? Do I turn to Christ in all of this?

Reflection and Questions by Rev. Robert B. Lawton, S.J.
I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness. Isaiah 42:3

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27; and John 12:1-11

A LENTEN PRAYER:
O Lord help me to be more like You in this Lenten season, help me to fight for justice for all.
Lord, You give bread and spirit to all people, give me the strength to walk with You and to understand the ways in which You want me to live my life.
How can I be afraid when You, my light and my salvation, are here?
Guide me in a way that helps me to live the life You chose for me.
Watch over me as I spread the good news You shared with us.
Help me to trust in my friends and family with all my heart and to love them with all the love You have shown me.
Teach me Father to be thankful for every blessing in my life.
Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How can we learn to protect and love our friends as much as Jesus did? What can we do to be more like Him this Lenten season?

Prayer and Questions by Christina Holzman ’13
Be my rock and refuge, my secure stronghold; for you are my rock and fortress.
Psalm 71:3

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71; and John 13:21-33, 36-38

LENTEN REFLECTION:
On this Tuesday of Holy Week, we continue to prepare ourselves to be open to God's gifts. Our prayer is to have an open mind, body and soul to experience the Lord in all His glory. The readings give us an opportunity to reflect about our patterns and priorities. We think about our relationship with God in a more intimate way—He gave us His only Son to share with us eternal life. What an amazing and generous gift! In return, God wants us to continue to reverence Him. God understands our weaknesses. He wants to take care of us, but we must be open and willing to follow Him.

Today, Tuesday of Holy Week, we are reminded of Christ’s suffering that prepared the way for us so we can enjoy the graces of God. This week is the time when our hearts are being renewed, as we experience God’s infinite mercy and love.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
Am I open and willing to follow Christ’s passion this week? What are those things that are keeping me away from following Christ? Have I identified those patterns and priorities recently? What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ?

Reflection and Questions by Maria Grandone, Ethnic & Intercultural Services
Wednesday of Holy Week
MARCH 31, 2010

The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced. Isaiah 50:7

Scripture Passages from the daily Mass: Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 69; and Matthew 26:14-25

A LENTEN PRAYER:
Dear Lord,

The good feelings that usually accompany any attempts to follow You have currently past, and the light of Your Resurrection is hard to see. I want to seek Your Kingdom in my life, but I have fallen short of this desire through my own weaknesses. At times, internal voices focus on these shortcomings and prevent me from moving forward. I ask for Your help that I may not give in to these voices. Please grant me the humility to realize my need for You in all aspects of life and the courage to move away from the things that prevent me from seeing You and Your will more clearly. You are the center of my life and You have loved me into existence. Help me to better realize Your role in everything and to love as You do.
Amen.

QUESTION FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:
How might I turn to God for help when following Him becomes difficult?

Prayer and Question by Andrew Wiese ’11
Editors:
Charles T. Cownie
Fr. Marc Reeves, S.J.