

Sacrifice of Praise

First Sunday of Advent: Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7 / Romans 5:12–19 / Matthew 4:1–11



Jesus Offers Us an Example for Resisting Temptation

In Scripture, forty symbolizes a time of waiting and preparing. Jesus’ response to the desert temptations presents three excellent examples of how we can fight temptation in our lives. In today’s Gospel (Mt 4:1–11), we witness the faith-strengthening power of fasting, Scripture, and prayer. In the desert, Jesus empties himself physically with a forty-day fast and in turn is strengthened spiritually. He retreats to be alone with his Father, nourished only by communion with his Father, in preparation for his upcoming mission. Jesus roots his ministry — in fact, his entire existence — in prayer.

Lent is our desert. It is our forty days of waiting and preparing and is much more than a test to see how long we can hold out from choco-

FOR REFLECTION

- Jesus retreated from the busyness of his daily life for prayer. Are you able to find time during this Lent to fast from some of your activities to give God your undivided attention?
- Do you include solitude, fasting, and Scripture in your prayer time?
How can prayer help you with the temptations you most often succumb to?

late. Lent is an opportunity to practice using the gifts of our faith to avoid the many temptations we face each day. The Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving offer a foundation upon which we can build a solid faith. We, too, are called to empty ourselves physically through fasting to make room to be nourished by the loving, merciful presence of God in our lives. We also are being prepared for a mission. Strengthened by this Lenten

season, we are to go forth and share the Good News.

After forty days and nights of fasting, Jesus is hungry, but not just for food. Remember, the Spirit has led him into a period of preparation for ministry. Jesus will begin preaching in Galilee upon returning from the desert. He emerges hungry to share his message of love and mercy, the Good News of redemption and salvation.

Jesus’ weapon against the lies and snares of the devil?

The Word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword (see Heb 4:12). The exchange between Jesus and the devil illustrates not only strength the faithful can draw from for spiritual battle in the Word, but also the great importance of understanding the meaning of each Scripture.

The Prince of Lies twists Scripture for his own advantage, but Jesus, empowered through fasting and prayer, sees clearly through each temptation and orders Satan away. He emerges from the experience ready to begin spreading the Good News.

Where will the next forty days bring you? Will you, too, at the end of your period of waiting and preparation be strengthened by prayer, fasting, and the Scriptures, to avoid temptation?



There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot solve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.

– SISTER LUCIA, FÁTIMA SEER

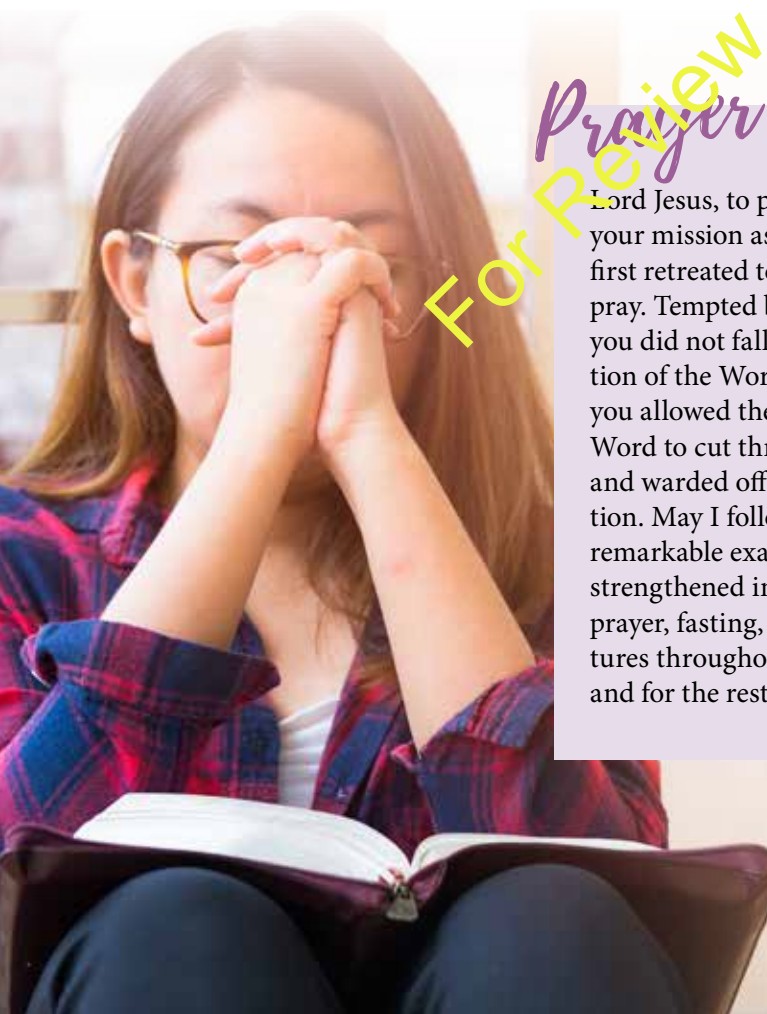
Don't Know How to Pray?

Prayer can be an intimidating word. Some people worry they don't pray enough; others feel they aren't saying their prayers correctly. The bad news: You probably are not praying enough. But this problem is easier to solve than you think. We can pray while commuting to work or school, folding the laundry, even during our recreation. St. Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17), meaning, throughout the day, all day. The good news: The only wrong way to pray is not to pray at all. Prayer can be formal or informal, it should flow from your heart.

St. John Damascene wrote, "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2559). There is a Catholic tradition to help us remember the four types of prayers we can offer to God, through the acronym ACTS.

A	C	T	S
Adoration	Contrition	Thanksgiving	Supplication

We'll be looking at each one of these prayer offerings throughout the coming weeks of Lent.



Lord Jesus, to prepare for your mission as Savior, you first retreated to fast and pray. Tempted by the devil, you did not fall for his distortion of the Word. Instead, you allowed the truth of the Word to cut through the lies and ward off all temptation. May I follow your remarkable example to be strengthened in faith through prayer, fasting, and the Scriptures throughout this Lent and for the rest of my life.



Never Too Busy to Pray

St. Francis de Sales believed that every person has a call to holiness. He gave spiritual direction to many lay men and women through letters. His preaching, teaching, and priestly duties kept him incredibly busy. St. Francis, however, knew that, regardless of how busy he became, prayer needed to be at the center of his life. He taught, "Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer a day, except when we are busy — then we need an hour."

CATECHISM CONNECTION



"Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2562

Sacrifice of Praise

Second Sunday of Advent: Genesis 12:1–4a / 2 Timothy 1:8b–10 / Matthew 17:1–9

The Glory of the Lord Shone All About

Jesus led three chosen apostles — Peter, James, and John — to a high mountain. There Jesus was transfigured, appearing in dazzling white before them as a foreshadowing of his glorified self. What a magnificent moment for all to behold. The Lord’s “face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light” (Mt 17:2), a “dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them” (Mk 9:3).

As if that sight were not enough, appearing alongside the Lord were Moses and Elijah. Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets; both figures share having encountered God on a holy mountain and experienced an exodus. Both were representing significant moments and a prefiguring of Jesus’ mission, as well as being pivotal characters in the salvation history story.

How the three disciples must have doubted what their eyes were seeing. How often have we looked upon the Eucharist and doubted who was truly present before us? There on the altar in all his glory, under the guise of wine and bread, is our Lord and Savior — body, blood, soul, and divinity. Jesus, glorified in splendor before them, was preparing them for what was about to come, present to us in the Eucharist, preparing our hearts and soul for when he will come again.

Peter’s response seems strange and rash. He wishes to erect three booths to freeze that moment in time. He thought it an experience so incredible and unimaginable that he never wanted it to end — a reaction anyone who has been witness to the birth of a child, stood with a loved one at a wedding, or enjoyed a special vacation would understand; those times in our lives when the



FOR REFLECTION

- How can prayer help you witness God’s glory?
- Describe how you feel in the presence of the Lord, hidden in the mystery of the Eucharist.
- Have you experienced a moment so special you never wanted to leave it?

world seems to stand still as the event unfolded before our eyes, in ways so unexpected or unparalleled, our hearts burst with joy!

Then, while Peter was still speaking, a cloud descended, and the voice of God breaks through Peter’s ramblings, and says, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him” (Mk 9:7). God is not merely

delivering this message to these chosen three, but he is revealing Jesus’ authority to each of us.

How often are we, like Peter, still speaking instead of prayerfully discerning the circumstances unfolding before us in life. How often do we allow the Holy Spirit, and the voice of God, to quiet us as to instruct and guide, that we may better know the will of God in our lives?

We are deaf to the guidance and blessings God longs to bestow — the gift of salvation, the gift only he, through his Son, can offer. How often in prayer do you sit quietly and listen for the whisper of the Holy Spirit to guide your heart? Do you allow God to interrupt your own narrative when he seeks to speak to you?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, hide not your glory from me. Open my eyes so I might notice in the people I meet, the beauty of nature, and the quiet of my heart while in prayer how all display your glory. The Transfiguration prepared the disciples for what they were about to experience in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. May my Lenten practices transform my heart, to be better prepared for the experiences of Holy Week this year.

Any time spent before the Eucharistic presence, be it long or short, is the best-spent time of our lives. – ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA

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LENTEN TIP

How Do We Worship the Glory of God, When It Is Hidden from Us?

Almsgiving offers a chance to serve others. If you want to see the glory of God, then look for it in those he has created. As Mother Teresa said, “Each one of them is Jesus in disguise.”

Here are a few suggestions for ways to worship God as we serve others:

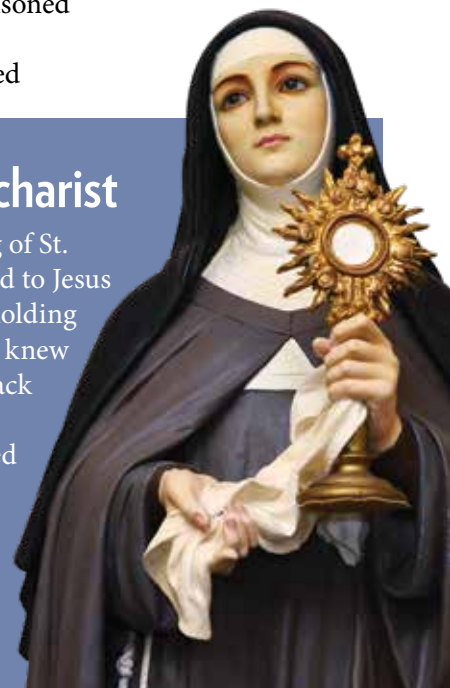
- Help in a soup kitchen
- Spend time with your family cleaning the basement or attic — donate “your treasure”
- Visit the homebound, elderly, ill, or imprisoned
- Participate in the Rice Bowl Project
- Collect school supplies for children in need

Transfiguration Trivia

- 1 Although often presumed to have occurred on Mount Tabor in Israel, none of the Gospels specify where the Transfiguration actually happened.
- 2 The Transfiguration transpired while Jesus was praying.
- 3 Moses and Elijah each experienced an exodus, while Jesus was preparing to participate in the New Exodus.
- 4 The event is considered by some scholars as the culminating point of Jesus' public ministry, having its beginning in his baptism and conclusion with his ascension.

Power in Prayer and the Eucharist

St. Clare of Assisi, inspired by the preaching of St. Francis, left her aristocratic life to be devoted to Jesus as a cloistered nun. Clare is often depicted holding the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance. She knew the power of the Eucharist. Once, under attack by invading Saracens, tradition holds, she thwarted their advance by raising the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance while praying with great trust for God's protection. While doing so she comforted the other sisters in the convent with the words: “Don't be afraid. Trust in Jesus.”



Sacrifice of Praise

Third Sunday of Advent: Exodus 17:3–7 / Romans 5:1–2, 5–8 / John 4:5–42

Contrition Offers Us a Way to Approach the Lord

In today's Gospel reading, every detail of the encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well, a Samaritan woman, reveals Jesus' deep abiding love for all people.

First, let's look at the location and time of day when Jesus and the woman at the well meet. Jesus is in Samaria, home to people considered unclean by the Jews. Everything they touch, including the water in the well, would have been considered unclean. Note the time of day: It is the hottest time of the day; most of the women would have completed the task of collecting water in the cool of the morning. The Samaritan woman comes at this time to avoid others, specifically the judgment of others.

During their conversation, we can witness the progression of the woman's faith. (Perhaps you recognize yourself in her story?) Her relationship with the man seeking to have his thirst quenched is one with a stranger.

Next, Jesus reveals he knows the intimate details of her life. He gently but clearly states the truth of her current state of life, causing her to consider him a prophet. (Perhaps you, too, have experienced the Holy Spirit nudging your heart, gently revealing behaviors or choices that keep you bound and ashamed.)

After gaining her trust by showing the woman that despite all she has done or who she may be, he longs to give her the promise of salvation; she now sees him as the Messiah. Finally, accepting this invitation to be set free through the living water of his mercy and forgiveness, she proclaims him as Savior. She emerges from this encounter contrite and transformed, symbolically dropping her pot (see Jn 4:28) and with it her



FOR REFLECTION

- Sometimes we need to ask for forgiveness; other times we need to offer it. Recall examples of each in your life. Did you experience joy from offering or receiving forgiveness?
- When have you encountered God's mercy in your life?
- When you come to pray, do you first seek God's forgiveness for your sins?

old way of life. From what situation can Jesus' mercy and love free you?

As a true disciple, the Samaritan woman, known as St. Photina in the Eastern rite, finds others with whom to share the Good News. She runs to find others with which to share her story and invites them to encounter Christ for themselves. Many became believers because of her testimony. Remarkable are the words of those who returned to the woman to report, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have

heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

Jesus thirsts for each of us to encounter him, to witness our relationship evolve from strangers to believers, to proclaim him as Savior.

Embracing contrition, we can be freed from our burdens through the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pray for and with a heart of contrition to allow Jesus to gently show who you presently are and who he longs for you to be.



Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the invitation during Lent to take a closer look at my life, to look deeply at the places in which I may be faltering or missing opportunities to show your glory in the world. Lord, thank you for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Please strengthen my heart to make a healing, grace-filled confession before Easter.

How to Make a Good Confession

Has it been a while since you've been to the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Lent is the perfect time to rectify that. Here is a quick refresher:

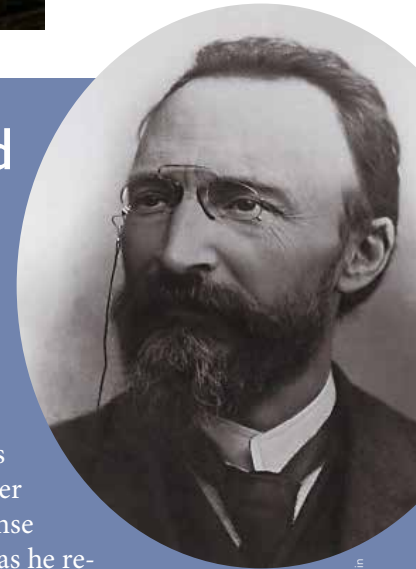
- Examination of Conscience. Spend some time in prayer recalling your sins.
- Confession begins with, "Forgive me, Father, it has been X amount of time since my last confession." If you are nervous or unsure how to proceed, this is a good time to ask for assistance.
- Share your transgressions, listen to the priest's response, and receive your penance.
- Conclude with the Act of Contrition. Feel free to bring it written down if you don't have one memorized.
- Upon leaving the confessional, spend a few moments completing (if possible) the penance the priest has assigned you.

That's it. You are now a new creation in Christ. Allow the grace of this sacrament to guide your prayer, almsgiving, and fasting for the remainder of your Lenten season.

The Great Mercy of God

Bartolo Longo was a priest of Satan before his conversion to Catholicism. He feared, "As the priesthood of Christ is for eternity, so also the priesthood of Satan is for eternity. So, despite my repentance, I thought that I was still consecrated to Satan, and I am still his slave and property as he awaits me in hell. As I pondered over my condition, I experienced a deep sense of despair." Consolation came to him as he recalled this promise from the Blessed Virgin Mary, "One who propagates my Rosary shall be saved," and he recounted, "Falling to my knees, I exclaimed: 'If your words are true that he who propagates your Rosary will be saved, I shall reach salvation because I shall not leave this earth without propagating your Rosary.'"

Blessed Bartolo spent his life promoting the Rosary; in fact, it was from his writings that Pope St. John Paul II based the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, also known as the Mysteries of Light. If Blessed Bartolo's life could be used for such a splendid purpose, imagine what amazing things God can do with you?



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Lord Jesus, let my heart never rest until it finds You, who are its center, its love, and its happiness. By the wound in Your heart pardon the sins that I have committed whether out of malice or out of evil desires.

– ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE



Sacrifice of Praise

Fourth Sunday of Advent: 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a / Ephesians 5:8-14 / John 9:1-41



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The Blessing of a Thankful Heart

In today's Gospel, the disciples questioned Jesus if sin caused the man's blindness. Did he or someone in his family warrant this punishment by their offense to God? The disciples listened and accepted Jesus' explanation that the man's lack of sight was not due to sin but instead was to show the glory of God. Meanwhile, the Pharisees refused to accept Jesus' teaching and in essence became the blind ones. Ironically, their inability to see could be directly attributed to sin — specifically, the sin of pride.

They refused to believe in the miracle which had occurred right before them and would never be able to see the miracles Jesus could perform in their lives. Their metaphorical blindness remained because they were unwilling to believe in any truth other than their own. Jesus has the power and authority to open anyone's eyes, to break through anyone's darkness, but first we have to be willing to see.

Sometimes we face circumstances truly beyond our control, which make

FOR REFLECTION

- Make a list of all the things you are grateful for. Spend time in prayer thanking God for each one.
- In difficult situations, are you able to recognize reasons to be thankful?
- What burdens keep you free from embracing a hope-filled life in Christ?

us wonder what we've done to be abandoned by God or what may have angered him. It is imperative to understand an important truth about God: He does not bring hardships; these exist as a result of the Fall in the Garden of Eden. God has given each of us free will so that we may be able to freely choose to enter into a relationship with him — one based on love, not coercion.

Trusting in God's promises that "all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28), or that "for human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible" (Mt

19:26), can be difficult in the midst of a tragedy, trial, or difficulty. However, one who continues to pray in thanksgiving maintains a grateful heart and remains hopeful, like the man born blind. Although Jesus' method of curing the man's blindness may have seemed strange, the man, thankful for a chance at healing, followed Jesus' instructions.

Lent is the perfect time to rub mud in our eyes, figurately speaking, and allow Jesus to heal our spiritual blindness. Whether currently struggling through a difficult time, or scars from past battles that are hard to forget, prayers of thanksgiving can mold those experiences into blessings. Clarity of vision of the cumulative experiences in our lives belong only with God; apart from him, we will never make sense of them. Remaining close, thankful, and open to seeing his hand in all that happens in the world, keeps our hearts safeguarded from growing hard. Lent is a time to reflect on what blinds us from saying, "Lord, I believe," and a time to refocus on following the Light of the World.

PRAYER TIP

When do you find time for prayer within a typically busy day? Some days do not lend themselves to dedicated or uninterrupted prayer time. Instead of skipping prayer, find ways to build it into the things you are already doing. Here are a few suggestions:

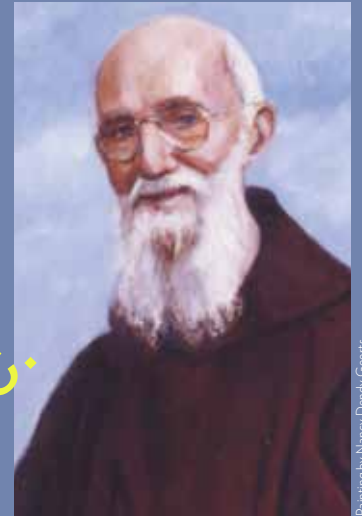
- Use your morning coffee time to read a Scripture verse.
- Recite the Rosary on your drive to work.
- Bring joy to your chores by thanking God for the food that dirtied the dishes, the clothes that now fill the hamper, and a floor that requires vacuuming.
- Offer a Hail Mary while brushing your teeth.
- Pray before (and even after) each meal.

“Give thanks to the Lord ...
whose love endures forever.”

– 1 CHRONICLES 16:34

Thank God Ahead

Blessed Solanus Casey was a simple Capuchin friar from Oak Grove, Wisconsin. Blessed Solanus is an extraordinary example of how a person can foster devout faith amid an ordinary life. Through his many hardships, he learned the blessing of maintaining a heart of gratitude, regardless of current circumstances. Solanus often counseled people to consider the good God would do in the future for them, and to “Thank God ahead of time!”



Painting by Nancy Dendy Geerts



Prayer

Lord Jesus, may I remember each day this Lent to thank you for each blessing and each cross. May the devotion I offer you be from a place of great love and not hinge on my happiness, but instead on the blessed hope found in Easter. Our blessings are abundant; so should our thanks to the One who bestows them. Lord, this week, I will pray without ceasing, giving thanks in all circumstances.

CATECHISM CONNECTION



“The inexhaustible richness of [the Eucharist] is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called:

“Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words *eucharistein* and *eulogein* recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim — especially during a meal — God’s works: creation, redemption, and sanctification.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1328

“Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is. Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2637

Sacrifice of Praise

Fifth Sunday of Advent: Ezekiel 27:12–14 / Romans 8:8–11 / John 11:1–45

Finding the Light of the World, in the World

In this week's Gospel, Jesus learns Lazarus is gravely ill. Out of great love for his friend, he chooses to travel back to Bethany. Those traveling with Jesus worry about his safety. Jesus tells the disciples they will travel during the light of day because anyone who walks in the light will not stumble — speaking here both figuratively and spiritually. Jesus is the “light of this world” (Jn 11:9), and we are called to walk in his teachings and his promises; if we walk by the light of Jesus, we will not risk stumbling into temptation nor falling away from faith.

Jesus shares seven “I Am” statements in the Scriptures. In this Gospel passage, he describes himself as light of the world, also “the resurrection and the life” (v. 25). Our hope for eternal life rests in Jesus Christ as Messiah, Savior. Could you answer Jesus with the affirmation of the belief that Martha did when he said to her: “Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (vv. 25–26).

She answered, “Yes, Lord, I ... believe.” Can you make this proclamation in your own life? Do you see the generosity of God in your life, that you can trust in his



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FOR REFLECTION

- How would you categorize your ability to trust God?
- Which prayers fortify or comfort you when you feel your faith wavering?
- Does Jesus' generosity toward his friends provide consolation or hope as you present your supplications to the Lord?

power whatever the circumstances? Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Sometimes we are dead in our faith — whether in our prayer life, in lackluster participation in the sacraments, or in lack of time spent reading the Scriptures. We may have allowed it to wither and maybe even develop, dare we say, a stench.

Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, are offered as

examples of contemplative and active prayers. When Jesus first visits them in Bethany, we find Martha anxious and busy, upset with her sister's contemplative stance at Jesus' feet. Jesus challenges her to find a balance in her life between work and prayer; she was missing that one thing needed — dedicated time with the Lord amidst all the other things to do. In John 11, with her proc-

lamation of faith in Jesus as Messiah, we witness the fruit of following Jesus' gentle admonition.

Lent is an opportunity for us to answer this same gentle exhortation from Jesus in our own lives. Beloved, you are anxious about a great many things, but only one thing is needed. Do you read those words and begin to make a list of the things for which you are worried? Can you recount the last time you sat at the Master's feet to learn from him? Do you believe you can come to Jesus with your supplications, no matter how dire or how many? Do you trust him with your life?



PRAYER TIP

Prayer bears fruit in our lives when offered in:

DEVOTION
with earnest belief

HUMILITY
with reverent awe

CONFIDENCE
with expectant hope

PERSEVERANCE
with unwavering patience

TRUST
with abandon to the will of God

An Act of Trust

The word **supplication** comes from the Latin verb *supplicare*, which means to plead humbly, or to beseech. A prayer of supplication calls for one to humble themselves before the Lord and ask (petition) for a favor only he can give. It is an act of trust in the angel Gabriel's words, "for nothing will be impossible for God" (Lk 1:37).

CATECHISM CONNECTION



"Jesus also prays for us — in our place and on our behalf. All our petitions were gathered up, once for all, in his cry on the Cross and, in his Resurrection, heard by the Father. This is why he never ceases to intercede for us with the Father. If our prayer is resolutely united with that of Jesus, in trust and boldness as children, we obtain all that we ask in his name, even more than any particular thing: the Holy Spirit himself, who contains all gifts."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2741

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you told your disciples to ask and it will be answered. In your mercy, what we receive always aligns with the will of your Father. If we, broken and sinful, strive to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father provide. I bring my supplications to you, trusting in your love and mercy.

Remaining Steadfast in Prayer



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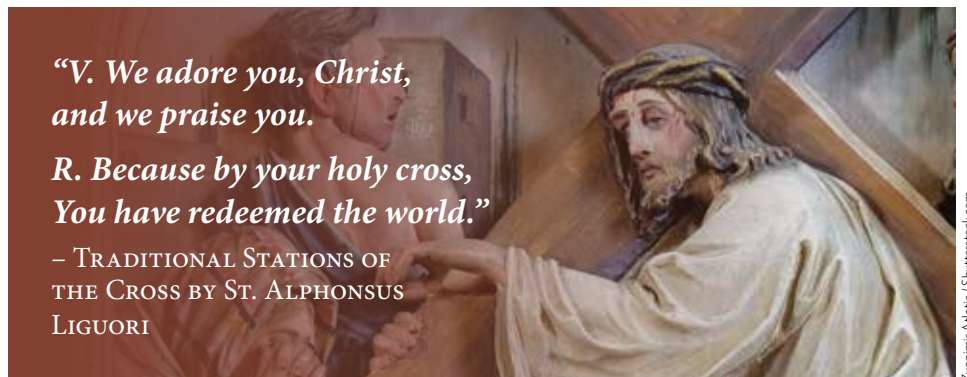
St. Gemma Galgani preferred to engage in informal prayer in the form of continually conversing with God throughout the day and night. This way, she believed, was the way to assure she remained in the presence of God at all times. Gemma spent a year suffering from spinal tuberculosis. After two failed attempts at reciting a novena to the Sacred Heart, she persevered and tried once more. This time, not only did she complete the nine days of prayer, but she also received a miraculous and complete cure of her ills upon its completion. Grateful to be cured, her focus remained on Jesus: "I too was

pleased, but not so much that I had been cured as that Jesus had chosen me for his child."

"V. We adore you, Christ, and we praise you.

R. Because by your holy cross, You have redeemed the world."

— TRADITIONAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS BY ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI



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Sacrifice of Praise

Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50:4–7 / Philippians 2:6–11 / Matthew 26:14–27:66



Judas Not the Only One to Betray Jesus

Like Judas, sometimes we can allow our earthly desires to cloud our ability to see God’s plans. We may also imitate Judas in putting our tasks ahead of receiving God’s blessing. At the Last Supper, Judas received the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ then left before receiving the final blessing. Technically, Judas is the first person to leave Mass early. While legitimate reasons exist to leave Mass after Communion, every effort should be made to remain until we are sent forth — graced and blessed.

This Palm Sunday reading from Matthew’s Gospel presents many other ways we, even unwittingly, betray Jesus. Many people do not accept the teaching of the Eucharist as the Real Presence — that is, Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist: body, blood, soul, and divinity.

Thousands of Jesus’ followers turned away in response to his pronouncement, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and

FOR REFLECTION

- In what ways do you deny Jesus?
- Do you believe the Eucharist is truly Jesus Christ — body, blood, soul, and divinity?
- Have you ever participated in the Holy Week liturgies? How can experiencing Holy Thursday and Good Friday liturgies enhance your Easter experience?

the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51). Jesus did not call after the retreating hoards saying they misunderstood. No, instead he turned to those who remained and inquired if they would accept this difficult teaching or also leave. Peter speaks for those remaining: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68).

This is the same Peter who will deny Jesus during the Passion. His declaration of fidelity reveals an intention to remain faithful; however, fear, confusion, and uncertainty rocked his faith.

He, like the rest of the apostles, when their Shepherd was struck, scattered like sheep. At the foot of the cross stood four people with faith we would be wise to emulate — the Blessed Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Clopas. These are our examples for remaining faithful and trusting in God’s plan, even when all seems lost.

Last, what about the question Jesus asks of his disciples when he finds them asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane: Could you not stay awake one hour with me? (see Mt 26:40). Could we not give even more than an hour to Jesus during Holy Week? We could do so by not only attending Palm Sunday Mass, but also Holy Thursday and Good Friday liturgies. Maybe this will be the year you come as a family to the Easter Vigil, regardless of the longer length of the Mass, so to give God the glory he deserves. Are you ready to fully enter into Easter like never before, aware of the sacrifice Christ made for our salvation?



“There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, he would have given it to us.”

– ST. JOHN VIANNEY



The Real Presence

“The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as ‘the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.’ In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially* contained.’ ‘This presence is called “real” — by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be “real” too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” — *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374

HOLY WEEK LITURGY HIGHLIGHTS

Palm Sunday

- Distribution and blessings of palms
- Gospel reading: the Passion of Our Lord

Holy Thursday

- Washing of feet
- Eucharistic procession — consecrated Hosts are reserved for Good Friday services and placed in a tabernacle on an altar of repose outside the sacristy
- After Mass, the faithful are encouraged to spend time in Adoration

Good Friday

- Gospel reading: the Passion of Our Lord
- Veneration of the Cross
- Communion service (only day of year there is no Mass)
- Some parishes offer the Stations of the Cross or special prayer services between noon and 3:00 p.m.

At the Foot of the Cross

Mary Magdelene, traditionally counted among the women in Luke’s Gospel who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, accompanied Jesus throughout the time of his earthly ministry. Mary Magdelene had the unique blessing of being present during most of the events of Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection.

She is the first to see Jesus alive following the Resurrection, documented in this remarkable exchange in John’s Gospel: “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?’ She thought it was the gardener and said to him, ‘Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means Teacher” (20:15–16). Mary Magdelene becomes then the apostle to the apostles, telling the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection. Do we not, too, wish to be apostles sharing this Good News as we celebrate Easter?



Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the glorious week of blessings that await us. We offer you the last forty days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in thanksgiving as preparation to fully receive your Easter joy! May I seek to participate fully in all activities and services my parish will offer this Holy Week. Inspire my heart, removing all obstacles, to make a good confession of sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Beginning with Palm Sunday, through the Triduum, and into Easter, may I seek to encounter you, Jesus, as never before. Amen.

