

# WERE YOU THERE



WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?  
WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?  
OH! SOMETIMES IT CAUSES ME TO TREMBLE, TREMBLE, TREMBLE.  
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# JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE



The three pillars of Lent are the aforementioned: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These practices have been a part of the church tradition for centuries and are still observed by many Christians today.

- Prayer is an essential aspect of the Lenten season. During this time, individuals are encouraged to reflect on their relationship with God and to seek a deeper spiritual connection with the divine. This can be achieved through daily prayers, attending church services, or participating in devotional activities such as the Stations of the Cross.
- Fasting is another important aspect of Lent. It involves giving up certain luxuries or desires for a period of time in order to focus on spiritual needs. This can take many forms, such as giving up food for a day, abstaining from certain foods for a period of time, or giving up other things like television or social media. The purpose of fasting is to help individuals draw closer to God by acknowledging their dependence on God and breaking away from worldly distractions.
- Almsgiving is the third pillar of Lent and involves helping those in need. This can involve donating to charities, volunteering time at a local soup kitchen, or helping a neighbor in need. Almsgiving is an expression of compassion and love. It is an integral part of the entire season, as it helps individuals to focus on their obligations to others and to live a life of selflessness and service.

The three pillars of Lent – prayer, fasting and almsgiving – serve as a reminder of the importance of spiritual growth and reflection. Through these practices, individuals can deepen their faith, strengthen their relationship with God, and live a more meaningful and purposeful life.

Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed

Isaiah 53:4-5

"I am the Lord who heals you" (the Lord, your healer). Exodus 15:26

*"I pray that you may prosper in every way and be in good health, just as your soul does well". 3 John 2*

"Praise the Lord, my soul...who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases". Psalm 103:2-3

*"I will restore you to health and heal your wounds".*

*Jeremiah 30:17*

# Healing

"For I am the God who heals you." Exodus 15:26

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest".*

*Matthew 11:28*

"Encourages praying over the sick with anointing oil promising the prayer of faith will make them well". James 5:14-15

"God's words bring life and healing to the whole body". Proverbs 4:20-22

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds".

Psalm 147:3

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*  
*Philippians 4:13*

"Daughter, your faith has healed you".

Mark 5:34

# A Litany for Healing



Together we lift our prayers to you, O God of love and healing.

(Father) - God the Father, you breathe life into your whole Creation.

**(Response) - Help us breathe deeply of your peace and presence.**

(Father) - God the Son, you give us yourself to make our joy complete.

**(Response) - Help us give our fear, pain, and grief to you.**

(Father) - God the Holy Spirit, you move through our lives in unexpected ways.

**(Response) - Help us move in concert with your life-giving motion.**

(Father) - Holy Trinity, One God, accept our thanks and praise for all the blessings of this life, especially for those blessings that our present circumstances make difficult to see.

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

(Father) - Shed the light of your healing love on all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit, that they may find new wholeness illumined by your grace.

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

(Father) - Knit together in your love all whose relationships have frayed, that they may find reconciliation and new beginnings.

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

(Father) - Bless all who work to improve the health of others, that they may bring hope, care, wisdom, and skill to all they serve.

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

(Father) - Hold in the palm of your hand all who are near death and all who care for them, that they may know the peace that passes all understanding.

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

(Father) - Grant all who turn to you the courage to participate with you in restoring this broken world to wholeness, that everyone and everything may share in the hope of your kingdom.

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

**I invite your prayers of thanksgiving or intercession in silence. (*Silence is kept.*)**

(Father) - For these and for all other petitions that are too deep for words, we pray to you:

**(Response) - O Lord, hear our prayer.**

(Father) - You are the Lord whose promises never cease.

**(Response) - You are the Lord whose presence never fails.**

Gracious God, you are close to us no matter how far we feel from you: draw us into the very heart of your grace and help us to live into the truth that nothing in all creation can separate us from your love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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## WEEK ONE JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE

# First Sunday of Lent

Each year on the First Sunday of Lent, we hear the account of Jesus spending forty days in the desert. From the Gospel we learn that our Lord didn't just wander into this desolate land but was led by the Spirit. Jesus trusted that the Spirit would help him through the difficult time ahead. After long days and nights of fasting in the desert, Jesus was hungry when the devil appeared. The devil challenged Jesus to turn stones into bread, to worship him, and to test God's loving care. At every turn. Jesus knew the Spirit was within him, and that his Father was close. Confident that he would receive strength to sustain him, he did not yield to temptation.

I invite you to read and meditate on God's Holy Word during this season of Lent, giving you all you need to surround yourself with the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

## STORY OF HOPE

Most of the time I feel like nothing in my life is turning out the way I hoped it would. It's hard for me to believe that God loves me. If God really loved me, He would come rescue me from my painful circumstances. One day, I read James 1:17 which says, "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." In that moment, I realized that every good thing in my life – everything that brings me comfort, joy and peace – is a gift from God. I am His child and he loves me. – A person living with depression.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7, 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19, Gospel Matthew 4:1-11

First Sunday of Lent video message titled "The Devil Made Me Do It - Matthew 4"".

What did you learn from Sunday's message?

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Read the overview of Matthew. This allows us to understand the magnitude of the context of the book.

## **Core Message**

Matthew reveals Jesus as the promised Messiah who inaugurates God's reign on earth through his life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, calling all people, Jew and Gentile, to follow him and live by kingdom principles.

## **Key Themes & Focus (NIV Context)**

- **Messianic Fulfillment:** Matthew meticulously links Jesus' life, miracles, and teachings to Old Testament (OT) prophecies, showing he is the long-awaited Messiah from David's line, fulfilling God's promises.

## WEEKLY APPLICATIONS

*"The Word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God."* (Pope Francis)

The goal of Lent is to refocus on the nature of the gospel, remembering the deep sacrifice, the sorrow, and the heaviness leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Daily, we are tempted to move away from the cross. Lent has a beautiful way of putting us in our place—a place where we remember the unavoidable necessity of the cross. *We are hopeless and helpless without the cross.*

Author John Stott said, "The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us."

Read the daily scripture readings. Answer the discussion questions. Meditate on the weekly message throughout the following weeks.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<b>PRAYER</b> Loving God, You call us back to You with all of our hearts. I feel Your call for me deep in my heart and I know You want me back as much as I want to return. Please, Lord, give me the wisdom to know how to return. Make my journey back to You this Lent one of grace, forgiveness and gentle love.	<b>PRAYER</b> Father of my soul, Mother of my heart, I know Your love for me is limitless beyond imagination. You care for me as a loving parent. Through my smallest Lenten sacrifices, help me to become less selfish and more aware of Your ways. Fan the flame of my desire to draw ever closer to You. Guide me to seek Your love.	<b>PRAYER</b> Dear Lord, I know You receive what is in my heart. Let me be inspired by Your words and by the actions of Your son, Jesus. Guide me to make sacrifices this Lent in the spirit of self-denial and with greater attention to You and to those around me. Help me to believe that You will grant me this because of the sacrifice Jesus made for me.
<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18 Gospel – Matthew 25:31-46	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Isaiah 55:10-11 Gospel – Matthew 6:7-15	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Jonah 3:1-10 Gospel – Luke 11:29-32
<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> Who is the "Son of Man" in this passage, and what does His coming signify?  Why does Jesus use the imagery of "sheep" and "goats" to represent different groups of people?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> What is the significance of addressing God as "Our Father in heaven"?  What does "Hallowed be Your name" mean, and how can we apply this in our daily lives?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> Why does Jesus call the crowds an evil generation?  Is there anything about our own generation or culture today that we might also call evil?

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Lord, I'm not always eager to do Your will. I'd often much rather do my own will. Please be with me on this Lenten journey and help me to remember that Your own spirit can guide me in the right direction. I want to fix my weaknesses, but the task seems overwhelming. But I know that with Your help, anything can be done. With a grateful heart, I acknowledge Your love and know that without You, I can do nothing.</p>	<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Creator of my Life, renew me: bring me to new life in You. Touch me and make me feel whole again. Help me to see Your love in the passion, death and resurrection of Your son. Help me to observe Lent in a way that allows me to celebrate that love. Prepare me for these weeks of Lent as I feel both deep sorrow for my sins and Your undying love for me.</p>	<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Loving God, sometimes my heart turns in every direction except towards You. Please help me to turn my heart toward You, to gaze upon You in trust and to seek Your kingdom with all of my heart. Soften my hardened heart so that I might love others as a way to glorify and worship You. Grant me this with the ever-present guidance of Your spirit</p>
<p><b>SCRIPTURE READING</b></p> <p>Ester C:12, 14-16, 23-25 Matthew 7:7-12</p>	<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Ezekiel 18:21-28 Gospel – Matthew 5:20-26</p>	<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Deuteronomy 26:16-19 Gospel – Matthew 5:43-48</p>
<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>How can we apply Mary's example of trust and obedience to our own lives today?</p> <p>When faced with challenging situations, how can we choose to respond with faith like Mary?</p>	<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTION</b></p> <p>What does verse 23-24 tell us about the importance of addressing conflict directly with someone you have a problem with?</p>	<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTION</b></p> <p>How does Jesus' teaching about anger in verses 21-22 challenge our typical understanding of what constitutes a sin?</p>

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## WEEK TWO JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE

# Second Sunday of Lent

The second Sunday of Lent is significant because it marks the halfway point of the Holy Season, between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. It is also known as Transfiguration Sunday, commemorating the moment Jesus Christ revealed His divine nature to his disciples by appearing in a glorified form on a mountaintop. The Transfiguration is a powerful reminder of the divine nature of Jesus and the importance of His mission on earth. It also encourages us to continue our Lenten journey with a deeper faith and dedication, knowing that we, too, can be transformed and made new through Christ's sacrifice.

The readings for the second Sunday of Lent often focus on themes of transformation, sacrifice, and discipleship. They invite us to reflect on our lives and better align ourselves with God's will and purpose. It is an amazing time to recommit ourselves to prayer, fasting, and acts of service as we seek to grow in faith and draw closer to God.

## STORY OF HOPE

When I came back from combat, I started using opiates and alcohol to deal with the pain and trauma I had been through. I felt like everyone I cared about was gone. I was afraid to let good people into my life and I became very isolated. I was so angry with God and held Him responsible for everything that went wrong in my life. I came to the point where I decided to take my life but then got on my knees on my bathroom floor and told God, "I give up. I'm sorry and I need your help." I cried like I never cried before, but these were tears of joy and healing. This time when I reached the end of my rope I let go and took God's hand., I know it's going to be a long journey of healing but now I know God is good. He loves me and I love Him. – Johnny, living with PTSD.

SCRITURE READINGS: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Genesis 12:1-4 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading 2 Timothy 1:8b-10, Gospel Matthew 17:1-9

Second Sunday of Lent video message titled "What Happens on the Mountain Does NOT Stay on the Mountain – Matthew 17:1-9".

What did you learn from Sunday's message?

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Read the overview of Matthew. This allows us to understand the magnitude of the context of the book.

## Core Message

Matthew reveals Jesus as the promised Messiah who inaugurates God's reign on earth through his life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, calling all people, Jew and Gentile, to follow him and live by kingdom principles.

## Key Themes & Focus (NIV Context)

- **New Moses:** Jesus is portrayed as a greater-than-Moses figure, delivering new divine law (like the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7) and leading a new exodus, as seen in his birth (like Moses from Egypt) and wilderness experience.

## WEEKLY APPLICATIONS

*"The Word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God."* (Pope Francis)

The goal of Lent is to refocus on the nature of the gospel, remembering the deep sacrifice, the sorrow, and the heaviness leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Daily, we are tempted to move away from the cross. Lent has a beautiful way of putting us in our place where we remember the unavoidable necessity of the cross. *We are hopeless and helpless without the cross.*

Author John Stott said, "The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us."

Read the daily scripture readings. Answer the discussion questions. Meditate on the weekly message throughout the following weeks.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<b>PRAYER</b> Lord, Your commandment of love is so simple and so challenging. Help me to let go of my pride, to be humble in my penance. I want only to live the way You ask me to love, to love the way you ask me to live. I ask this through Your son, Jesus, who stands at my side today and always.	<b>PRAYER</b> God in heaven and in my life, guide me and protect me. I so often believe I can save myself and I always end in failure. Lead me with Your love away from harm and guide me on the right path. May Your Spirit inspire the Church and make us an instrument of Your love and guidance. Thank You for Your care for me.	<b>PRAYER</b> God of Love, through this Lenten journey, purify my desires to serve You. Free me from any temptations to judge others, to place myself above others. Please let me surrender even my impatience with others, that with Your love and Your grace, I might be less and less absorbed with myself, and more and more full of the desire to follow You, in laying down my life according to Your example.
<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Daniel 9:4b-10 Gospel – Luke 6:36-38	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Isaiah 1:10, 16-20 Gospel – Matthew 23:1-12	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – <a href="#">Jeremiah 18:18-20</a> Gospel – <a href="#">Matthew 20:17-28</a>
<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> What does it mean to be merciful "just as Your Father is merciful"?  How does the idea of "do not judge, and you will not be judged" challenge our typical responses to others?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTION</b> What does "bearing fruit" represent in this context, and how can we identify the "fruit" in our lives?  Reflect on a time when you felt particularly connected to Jesus and experienced spiritual fruitfulness in your life.	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How does this story challenge your understanding of God's sovereignty and human responsibility?  What does it mean to You that Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit, and how does this impact your faith?

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Loving God, I hear Your invitation, "Come back to me" and I am filled with such a longing to return to You. Show me the way to return. Lead me this day in good works that I do in Your name and send Your Spirit to guide me and strengthen my faith. I ask only to feel Your love in my life today.</p>	<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Loving God, Caring parent, I am a child who so often turns my back on Your love. Please accept my small acts of sorrow today and help to release me from the self-absorption that closes my heart to You. As I journey through Lent, let me remember the feast You have prepared for me in the resurrection and let me be filled with thanks to You.</p>	<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>God of infinite love, You shower me with limitless gifts in my life. In my every thought and action today guide me to the bright and loving light of Your kingdom. Help me to be aware of the many ways You allow me to share in Your life so intimately today. Thank You for the gifts You have placed in my life. Let me be grateful every moment of this day.</p>
<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Jeremiah 17:5-10 Gospel – Luke 16:19-31</p>	<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a Gospel – Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46</p>	<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Micah 7:14-15, 18-20 Gospel – Luke 15:1-3, 11-32</p>
<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>What are some ways we can be tempted to prioritize material possessions over the needs of others, like the rich man?</p> <p>How does this parable encourage us to be mindful of the needs of those less fortunate around us?</p>	<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>How does this parable challenge our understanding of responsibility and accountability when given a position of leadership or privilege?</p> <p>How can we avoid becoming like the "wicked tenants" in our own lives and relationships?</p>	<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>Have you ever felt like the "prodigal son" in your relationship with God? How did you experience God's forgiveness?</p> <p>Have you ever wanted a do-over with something or regretted a decision that you have made?</p> <p>What was it and what happened?</p>

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## WEEK THREE

### JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE

# Third Sunday of Lent

The third Sunday of Lent marks a midpoint in the Lenten season and is a reminder that our journey towards Easter and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of hope and joy. In today's Gospel reading, we hear about the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus asks the woman for a drink of water, and in their conversation, He reveals Himself to be the living water that brings eternal life. This living water is a spring of water welling up to eternal life, which satisfies our deepest thirst for spiritual refreshment. The water jar that the Samaritan woman carries represents our own thirst for something more in life. We often look for fulfillment in material things or in the opinions of others, but true satisfaction can only be found in Jesus Christ, who offers us living water that never runs dry. As we journey through Lent, we are reminded to turn towards Christ and seek the living water that He offers. We are called to deepen our faith and commit to living a Christian life, guided by the teachings of Christ and sustained by His grace. So let us rejoice on this Third Sunday of Lent, knowing that in Jesus Christ, we have access to a spring of water welling up to eternal life, and let us strive to quench our thirst with the spiritual refreshment that only He can provide.

## STORY OF HOPE

I make the choice to stay alive because I don't know what God is going to do with my life. What if my life could be used to help people? I want to be here long enough to see that happen. Other people may impact the world, but God made me to change the world in ways only I can. I often think it would be easier to die; but the Holy Spirit whispers to me, "It may be easier, but it wouldn't be better." – Ashley, living with suicidal ideation

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading [Exodus 17:3-7](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading [Romans 5:1-2, 5-8](#),  
Gospel [John 4:5-42](#)

Third Sunday of Lent video message titled “The Springs of Living Mercy”.

What did you learn from Sunday's message?

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Read the overview of Matthew. This allows us to understand the magnitude of the context of the book.

## Core Message

Matthew reveals Jesus as the promised Messiah who inaugurates God's reign on earth through his life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, calling all people, Jew and Gentile, to follow him and live by kingdom principles.

## Key Themes & Focus (NIV Context)

- **Kingdom of Heaven:** Jesus announces and brings the Kingdom of Heaven to earth, demonstrating its power through healing and teaching, but its fullness awaits his return.

## WEEKLY APPLICATIONS

*"The Word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God." (Pope Francis)*

The goal of Lent is to refocus on the nature of the gospel, remembering the deep sacrifice, the sorrow, and the heaviness leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Daily, we are tempted to move away from the cross. Lent has a beautiful way of putting us in our place—a place where we remember the unavoidable necessity of the cross. *We are hopeless and helpless without the cross.*

Author John Stott said, "The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us."

Read the daily scripture readings. Answer the discussion questions. Meditate on the weekly message throughout the following weeks.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<b>PRAYER</b> Merciful God, Free Your Church from the sins of this world and protect us from evil we see and the evil we prefer to ignore. We need Your guidance, Lord for we cannot do this alone. Only with Your help can we be saved. Thank You for Your desire to save us and love us.	<b>PRAYER</b> God of infinite love, I thank You for this reminder of Your love and Your call that we be more patient, gentle and compassionate with others. Here in the middle of Lent, I turn to You to beg for Your help. Please soften my heart. Help me to let go of judging others. I ask You this, in Jesus' name.	<b>PRAYER</b> God, You love me as your own child. May I bend my life and will toward You so that I might accept Your teaching and guidance. I am so grateful for Your support in my life, now and in the eternal life You are preparing for me. I beg for Your help and Spirit in my life today.
<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – 2 Kings 5:1-15ab Gospel – Luke 4:24-30	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Daniel 3:25, 34-43 Gospel – Matthew 18:21-35	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9 Gospel – Matthew 5:17-19
<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How does this passage challenge the idea of "religious privilege" or the assumption that certain groups are automatically entitled to God's favor? Are there situations where we are resistant to hearing a message that challenges our current beliefs?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTION</b> ?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How can we apply Jesus' teaching about not breaking even the "least of these commandments" to our daily lives?  How does Jesus' claim to fulfill the law impact our understanding of his role and authority?

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><b><u>PRAYER</u></b></p> <p>Loving God, I hear Your invitation, "Come back to me" and I am filled with such a longing to return to You. Show me the way to return. Lead me this day in the good works I do in your name and send your Spirit to guide me and strengthen my faith. I ask only to feel Your love in my life today.</p>	<p><b><u>PRAYER</u></b></p> <p>God of Mercy, I feel my heart overflowing with Your tenderness. I sense Your loving touch deep within my soul. I ask for Your help in my weakness that I might be faithful to Your word, and I am so grateful that Your mercy for my failings is as strong as Your unbounded love for me.</p>	<p><b><u>PRAYER</u></b></p> <p>God of Mercy and Understanding, I know that with help I can open my heart more fully to the mysteries of the suffering and death of Your son. Help me to be humble on this journey and remember that any mercy and compassion I feel is a gift from You. I await the joy of Easter with new longing and patience.</p>
<p><b><u>SCRIPTURE READINGS</u></b></p> <p>First Reading – Jeremiah 7:23-28 Gospel – Luke 11:14-23</p>	<p><b><u>SCRIPTURE READINGS</u></b></p> <p>First Reading – Hosea 14:2-10 Gospel – Mark 12:28-34</p>	<p><b><u>SCRIPTURE READINGS</u></b></p> <p>First Reading – Hosea 6:1-6 Gospel – Luke 18:9-14</p>
<p><b><u>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>How can we apply the concept of a "divided house" to our own spiritual lives?</p> <p>What does it mean to be actively "with" Jesus in our daily lives?</p> <p>What are some modern-day examples of people who might be accused of using "evil powers" to achieve their goals?</p>	<p><b><u>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>What does it mean to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength?"</p> <p>How can we practically demonstrate loving God with our whole being?</p>	<p><b><u>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>What does it mean to be "humble" according to this parable?</p> <p>How can we identify areas in our own lives where we might be tempted to boast or compare ourselves to others?</p> <p>What does the story teach us about the importance of acknowledging our own sinfulness before God?</p>

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## WEEK FOUR JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE

# Fourth Sunday of Lent

We are reminded during Lenten Season that the compassion of God is followed by action. The Parable of the Prodigal Son shows quite well the character of our Creator in relation to us, His creation. The old image that some may have of a God in heaven looking down on us to see if we do wrong in order to immediately reprimand us for our iniquities, is not the image of God that Jesus reveals in this parable. Instead, He shows us a God that is slow to anger, but quick to bless. The prodigal son, even before he arrived to show contrition to his father, is met with open arms and deep love. God comes flying in the greatness of His compassion to help every penitent soul and when He comes, He comes to kiss us and embrace us. We are called during these 40 days of Lent to examine our lives and behavior. The spiritual awakening of the prodigal son allows us to remember our own awakening and how good it feels to be pardoned. I ask you to consider what situations of your life today are guided by your will, instead of by the divine. Taking a good look at our inner soul and considering what may be hindering our willingness to extend forgiveness and compassion to other people in our life who we feel have wronged us. Yes, we are called to repent and to mend our ways, but we are also called to be compassionate with others around us. God's love is not a scarce commodity, it never ends. There is never a shortage of love, and we are called to forgive the trespasses of others as we are forgiven for our own trespasses. The Parable of the Prodigal Son challenges us to look closely at our own dark emotions of anger and jealousy, as well as at our more benign qualities of humility, forgiveness, and compassion.

## STORY OF HOPE

It can be very difficult to choose healthy coping strategies when I'm feeling stuck and overwhelmed; especially if I'm presented with a lot of options. It's helpful to think about what helps me get unstuck before I am in a situation when I feel overwhelmed. When I am feeling good, I ask myself the following questions: "What is restorative to me, what things help me decompress, and how can I access these things when I am in a bad place?" Thinking about these questions beforehand allows me to make proactive decisions that will help me cope in a healthy way. – Nam, living with bipolar disorder

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading [1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a](#) 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading [Ephesians 5:8-14](#) Gospel [John 9:1-41](#)

Fourth Sunday of Lent video message titled "**Surely we are not blind, are we?**".

What did you learn from Sunday's message?

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Read the overview of Matthew. This allows us to understand the magnitude of the context of the book.

## **Core Message**

Matthew reveals Jesus as the promised Messiah who inaugurates God's reign on earth through his life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, calling all people, Jew and Gentile, to follow him and live by kingdom principles.

## **Key Themes & Focus (NIV Context)**

- **"God with Us" (Emmanuel):** From his birth (Matthew 1:23), Jesus embodies God's presence with His people, a central theme proving His divine identity.

## WEEKLY APPLICATIONS

*"The Word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God."*  
(Pope Francis)

The goal of Lent is to refocus on the nature of the gospel, remembering the deep sacrifice, the sorrow, and the heaviness leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Daily, we are tempted to move away from the cross. Lent has a beautiful way of putting us in our place—a place where we remember the unavoidable necessity of the cross. *We are hopeless and helpless without the cross.*

Author John Stott said, "The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us."

Read the daily scripture readings. Answer the discussion questions. Meditate on the weekly message throughout the following weeks.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<b>PRAYER</b> God who created me, You offer me new life through Your Son and through the gift of Your sacraments. While I see new life all around me, I don't always recognize the new life You offer me.  Help me to grow this Lent in an awareness of the gifts You place in my life and in a greater appreciation for Your care. Give me the courage to ask for help.	<b>PRAYER</b> Joyful praise in Lent? I'm not sure I always feel that. I ask You to help me prepare to understand and embrace the paschal mystery in my life. I don't always see the beauty and mystery of this season and often I run from the pain.  Help me to see how Your saving grace and Your loving touch in my life can fill me with joyful praise of the salvation You have sent to me.	<b>PRAYER</b> Loving and merciful God, I am so aware of my sins and weaknesses. But as painfully aware of my faults as I am, let me also remember Your tender love, Your gentle and limitless forgiveness. I come before You filled with pain and guilt but look into Your eyes and see the forgiving love I so long for in my life.  Help me to forgive the same way. Teach me to love as You love.
<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Isaiah 65:17-21 Gospel – John 4:43-54	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12 Gospel – John 5:1-16	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Isaiah 49:8-15 Gospel – John 5:17-30
<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> Have you ever had to trust God without seeing immediate results? How can this story encourage us to have greater faith in difficult situations? What does it mean to have a "living faith" that goes beyond just believing in facts about Jesus?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> What areas of your life might need healing, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual? How can we apply the message of this story to our own lives today, especially when facing challenges or limitations?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How does understanding Jesus' equality with the Father impact your faith and understanding of God?  What does this passage teach you about the importance of responding to Jesus' call in your life?

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>PRAYER</b> Merciful Father/ Loving Mother, I know that the tiny sacrifices I make this Lent can never serve as a real penance in my life. But help me to make my whole life one of following Your Son. I am filled with Your love. Let Your love shine out from within me and guide my life in this sacred journey toward the Easter joy You offer me.	<b>PRAYER</b> Loving God of forgiveness, I come before You humbled and sad in the face of my own repeated failings. I held out my hands as a petitioner would, asking for mercy. It is then that I feel You reach out and take my hand in Your loving grasp.  Thank You for the love You pour out on me so lavishly. Help me to follow more closely in the path You have set for me, the path of Your Son.	<b>PRAYER</b> Lord, what You ask of my life seems so right. It is how I want to live, following Your Son, Jesus, so closely. And yet I fail so often to stay on that path. I cannot do it alone, loving Lord. I need Your help and guidance. I need to remember Your love for me, and I want to remember how very much I need You in my life.
<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary  First Reading – <a href="#">2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16</a> Gospel – <a href="#">Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a</a>	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22 Gospel – John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Jeremiah 11:18-20 Gospel – John 7:40-53
<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How can we apply the idea of seeking validation from God rather than from people in our daily lives?  How does this passage challenge us to examine our own motivations for seeking praise and recognition?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> Have you ever faced skepticism or doubt from family members about your faith, and how did you navigate that situation?  What does it mean to "know" Jesus, and how can we deepen our personal relationship with him despite external pressures?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt a deep spiritual thirst that only Jesus could satisfy?  How does this passage challenge you to examine your own beliefs and convictions about Jesus?

# WERE YOU THERE



WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?  
WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?  
OH! SOMETIMES IT CAUSES ME TO TREMBLE, TREMBLE, TREMBLE.  
WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?

## WEEK FIVE JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE

# Fifth Sunday of Lent

Each year, as we approach the end of the Lenten Season, we are reminded that all of our hope in Christ for the resurrection and the new life we have together in Christ is grounded in the suffering and the death of Jesus. Our own agendas are nothing next to this. Any pain or guilt that we may suffer in keeping or breaking our Lenten discipline is nothing next to the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. That is essential to God's plan for salvation. In the town of Bethany, six days before the Jewish Passover, our Lord Jesus was visiting his friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. Martha served the meal, and Lazarus was at the table with Jesus and it was then when Mary anointed Jesus's feet with a very expensive perfume made of nard. The story that the Evangelist Saint John relates mentions that the house was filled with fragrance. Mary's house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment she poured on Jesus' feet, and it must have made quite an impression because Saint John mentioned it as he shared Jesus' life saying that Jesus spoke of it as foreshadowing his burial.

Next Sunday, we celebrate Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. I hope and pray that these meditations that followed the one for Ash Wednesday served to bring you closer to Christ and to continue your walk with him not only to the cross but to His resurrection.

## STORY OF HOPE

Saying “no” to people never came easy for me because I desperately needed people to like me. If I said “no” to them, I was afraid they would not like me and would never speak to me again. I’ve learned to identify my needs and say “no” to people and activities because they do not line up with God’s best for my life. I have found that my true friends do not leave me when I say “no” but instead have been really supportive of me taking care of myself. – Lina, living with anxiety

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading [Ezekiel 37:12-14](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading [Romans 8:8-11](#), Gospel [John 11:1-45](#)

Fifth Sunday of Lent video message titled “The Raising of Lazarus: Unbind Him and Let Him Go”.

What did you learn from Sunday’s message?

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Read the overview of Matthew. This allows us to understand the magnitude of the context of the book.

## **Core Message**

Matthew reveals Jesus as the promised Messiah who inaugurates God's reign on earth through his life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, calling all people, Jew and Gentile, to follow him and live by kingdom principles.

## **Key Themes & Focus (NIV Context)**

- **Servant King:** Jesus' mission is to serve and die as a sacrifice for sins, fulfilling the Suffering Servant prophecy, even though it defied expectations for a political king.

## WEEKLY APPLICATIONS

*"The Word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God." (Pope Francis)*

The goal of Lent is to refocus on the nature of the Gospel, remembering the deep sacrifice, the sorrow, and the heaviness leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Daily, we are tempted to move away from the cross. Lent has a beautiful way of putting us in our place—a place where we remember the unavoidable necessity of the cross. *We are hopeless and helpless without the cross.*

Author John Stott said, “The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us.”

Read the daily scripture readings. Answer the discussion questions. Meditate on the weekly message throughout the following weeks.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<b>PRAYER</b> God of love, I know that You are the source of all that is good and graced in my life. Help me to move from the life of sin to which I so often cling, into the new life of grace You offer me. You know what I need to prepare for Your kingdom. Bless me with those gifts.	<b>PRAYER</b> Loving God, You have heard my complaints, my impatience. Sometimes I become frightened when I move away from You. Guide my heart back to You. Help me to think beyond my own wants and to desire only to do Your will. Thank You for the many blessings in my life and for the ways I feel Your presence.	<b>PRAYER</b> Loving Creator, I know in Your great love for me, You see the deep sorrow in my heart. Hear my prayers which are offered with such trust in You. Be with me in both mind and heart as I renew my life in Your spirit.
<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62 Gospel – John 8:1-11	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> First Reading – Numbers 21:4-9 Gospel – John 8:21-30	<b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b> Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord First Reading – <a href="#">Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10</a> Second Reading - <a href="#">Hebrews 10:4-10</a> Gospel – <a href="#">Luke 1:26-38</a>
<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How does this story illustrate the difference between legalistic judgment and merciful forgiveness? How can we apply Jesus' example of forgiveness to our own lives and relationships?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> How does this passage challenge you to consider your own relationship with Jesus as the "light of the world"? How can you actively choose to live in the light of His truth?	<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b> Have you ever experienced a moment where knowing the truth set you free in a significant way? How does understanding the concept of "truth" as presented by Jesus impact our ethical decision-making?

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Lord, all I want is to be faithful to You in my life, but so often I fail. Free me from my many sins and guide me to the life I will share with You. I wait for Your promise to be fulfilled with great hope in my heart and Your praise on my lips.</p>	<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Most forgiving Lord, again and again You welcome me back into Your loving arms. Grant me freedom from the heavy burdens of sin that weigh me down and keep me so far from You.</p>	<p><b>PRAYER</b></p> <p>Loving God, Your eternal watchfulness keeps me safe from harm. I am filled with great happiness when I feel Your endless love for me. Thank You for Your care for me, one of Your children. I ask You to protect from harm those who will soon be Your children, joined in the joy of Your church. Please continue to pour out Your blessings on all of us who have been given the lifegiving waters of Baptism.</p>
<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Genesis 17:3-9 Gospel – John 8:51-59</p>	<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Jeremiah 20:10-13 Gospel – John 10:31-42</p>	<p><b>SCRIPTURE READINGS</b></p> <p>First Reading – Ezekiel 37:21-28 Gospel – John 11:45-56</p>
<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>How can we apply the concept of "abiding" in Jesus' word to our daily lives?</p> <p>What does it look like to live a life that demonstrates a true understanding of Jesus' identity and teachings?</p>	<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>What does it mean to "hear the voice" of Jesus?</p> <p>How can we discern whether our actions align with our claim to follow Jesus?</p> <p>What does it look like to "abide" in Jesus?</p>	<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>How can we apply the concept of "believing even when we don't see" to our own faith lives?</p> <p>What are some situations where our fear or self-preservation might lead us to resist the truth, like the chief priests and Pharisees?</p> <p>How does this passage challenge us to consider the cost of following Jesus and standing up for what is right?</p>

# WERE YOU THERE



WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?  
WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?  
OH! SOMETIMES IT CAUSES ME TO TREMBLE, TREMBLE, TREMBLE.  
WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?

# JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE HOLY WEEK



Palm Sunday is a day where “Four Wheel Christians” can fully participate. We all can take part in praising and blessing the Lord together with a multitude of disciples as Jesus passes riding His colt. For sure you and I would have liked to be one of those in that admiring crowd, but definitely not some of those who once were in that welcoming crowd but only a few days later shouted “Crucify Him” when asked by Pontius Pilate. I always say, that the problem with many Christians is that they are only “Four Wheel Christians” like those who ride to their baptism, ride to Easter service, ride to Christmas service and then ride to their funeral. Holy Week has begun, and Lent is now behind us. We completed our annual house cleaning, a kind of Spring training for life. We leave the ashes behind and take the palms to welcome our Lord. It may look like an easy and happy ending to the Gospel story, but we know that it ends in a sacrifice. We also know that in His death we find eternal life. Take this time of Holy Week to rejoice and celebrate a few days of vocation that will be followed by the celebration of Maundy Thursday, the solemn remembrance of Christ dying on the cross, walking the Stations of the Cross, meditating, and resting on the Holy Sabbath and then rejoicing in our Lord’s resurrection Easter Sunday – crowning the cross with flowers. I invite you to praise God rejoicing with your palms, welcoming our Lord into your lives and be willing to serve Him by serving others. Our Lord summons you to live out your life, to live out your responsibility in your encounters with others.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: At the Procession with Palms – Gospel [Matthew 21:1-11](#)  
At the Mass - Reading I [Isaiah 50:4-7](#), Reading II [Philippians 2:6-11](#), Gospel [Matthew 26:14—27:66](#)

#### STORY OF HOPE

God, Thank You for loving me even when I feel unlovable. I am grateful that You don’t judge me by my past and that you forgive me when I mess up. Teach me to love and accept myself just as You love and accept all of me. As I spend more and more time with You, and soak in Your restoring Word, I know I will be continually refreshed. Thank You for the hope that sustains and replenishes my soul.

*Go to [www.bowmanfrancis.org](http://www.bowmanfrancis.org) to hear Fr. Charles’ Palm Sunday message.*

# Monday- Holy Week Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Isaiah 42:1-7; Gospel: John 12:1-11

God of love, my prayer is simple: Your son, Jesus, suffered and died for me. I know only that I cannot have real strength unless I rely on You. I cannot feel protected from my many weaknesses until I turn to You for forgiveness and Your unalterable love. Help me to share this strength, protection and love with others.

## REFLECTION - Expressing Your Love of God

Then Judas the Iscariot, one of His disciples, and the one who would betray Him, said, “Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?” John 12:4-5. Jesus was with His disciples at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. He regularly spent time at their home and was close to them. This meal took place just before Jesus entered into Jerusalem for the first Palm Sunday and Holy Week. It was six days before Jesus would die on the cross. Recall that Lazarus had recently been raised from the dead by Jesus and also that Mary, Lazarus’ sister, was deeply devoted to Jesus and is recorded as the one who sat at His feet, while her sister Martha served. During this visit, Mary offered another act of devotion to Jesus when she anointed Him with “a liter of costly perfumed oil.” She offered Him an act of love and devotion. The Scripture passage above records Judas’ response as he also was at the meal. Jesus rebukes Judas and defends the act of devotion given by Mary, and the meal continues on.

One clear lesson this teaches us is that nothing is too good for our Lord. It’s true that we must do our part to help care for the poor, but Jesus’ response to Judas is quite interesting. He says, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” Jesus was not downplaying the importance of caring for the poor; He was emphasizing the importance of offering acts of love and devotion to Him.

As we enter into this the holiest week of the year, we are given this image of Mary lavishing upon Jesus this liter of costly perfumed oil as a way of inviting us to do the same. Though we serve Christ in others who are in need, we must also seek to regularly offer Him devotion and love directly, even in ways that others may think is excessive. Honoring Him, expressing our love, spending time with various devotions, praying for extended periods of time, and even offering Him our financial resources are all ways in which we give Jesus the glory that is due Him.

Reflect, today, upon ways in which you can imitate this act of loving devotion offered by Mary to Jesus. In what ways can you pour forth in an abundant way your time, money, talents, and energy upon our Lord? How can you best express your devotion to Him this Holy Week? Seek out ways to do this directly for the one simple reason that you love our Lord and want to express that love this week. *My glorious Jesus, You are worthy of all praise and honor. You are worthy of our deepest devotion and love. As I enter into this Holy Week, I pray that it will be a time in which I may express my deepest love for You. Help me to pour forth that love in abundance this week so as to show You the glory and praise You deserve. Jesus, I trust in You.*

# Tuesday- Holy Week Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: [Isaiah 49:1-6](#); Gospel: [John 13:21-33, 36-38](#)

God of such unwavering love, how do I "celebrate" the passion and death of Jesus? I often want to look the other way and not watch, not stay with Jesus in His suffering. Give me the strength to see His love with honesty and compassion and to feel deeply Your own forgiveness and mercy for me. Help me to understand how to "celebrate" this week. I want to be able to bring my weaknesses and imperfections with me as I journey with Jesus this week, so aware of His love.

## REFLECTION - The Glory of God in All Things

"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and He will glorify Him at once." [John 13:31-32](#) Jesus speaks this line about Himself being glorified immediately after Judas leaves the supper to go forth to betray Him. Jesus had just finished washing the feet of His disciples, and soon He would finish the Last Supper, go to the Garden of Gethsemane, be arrested, beaten, and crucified. And this was to all take place through the betrayal of one of the Twelve. Yet rather than speak of these pending events in a fearful or anxious way, Jesus points to the glory He will receive through them. Everything in life has the potential to become an instrument of the glory of God. Even our sin can end in God's glory when we repent and receive God's forgiveness. It will not be our sin that glorifies God, but His mercy poured forth from the Cross upon us that gives Him glory. The same is true with the events of Holy Week. When looked at from a purely human perspective, what Jesus endured was tragic and horrific. One of His closest companions betrayed Him. The religious leaders of the time betrayed Him. The civil authorities betrayed Him. And all of the disciples, except John, fled in fear as Jesus was betrayed. But Jesus did not look at any of this through human eyes alone. He saw it all from the eternal perspective and clearly taught that all of these seemingly tragic events would end in His glory.

When we commit ourselves to the following of Christ, we can be assured that we will also share in His Cross. We will experience the sins of others, encounter mistreatment, and have to endure various sufferings. The question for us all as we have these encounters in life, is whether we will endure them in anger and despair, or with the hopeful confidence of our Lord. Again, everything in life has the potential to become an instrument of the glory of God. Nothing in life has the power to steal away that glory when we keep our eyes upon the will of God and His power to use all for His glory.

Reflect, today, upon your call-in life to see everything from the divine perspective. If you are upset, angry, despairing or confused at times, know that God wants to bring clarity and grace to every situation. He wants to show you how you can share in His divine mission of transforming every evil into God's glory. Seek out the ways that your life must give glory to God in everything, especially those things that seem incapable of being used for good. The more an experience in life seems incapable of being used for God's glory, the more that experience is capable of giving true glory to God.

*My glorious Lord, You brought forth good from all things. Even the grave evil of Your betrayal was transformed into a manifestation of Your glory. I offer to You, dear Lord, all that I endure in life and pray that You will be glorified in all things, and that my life will continually become a manifestation of the glory due Your holy name. Jesus, I trust in You.*

# Wednesday- Holy Week Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Gospel: Matthew 26:14-25

My savior, do You invite me to share in the glory of the resurrection? Please stay with me as I struggle to see how accepting the crosses of my life will free me from the power of the one who wants only to destroy my love and trust in You. Help me to be humble and accepting like Your son, Jesus. I want to turn to You with the same trust He had in Your love. Save me, Lord. Only You can save me.

## REFLECTION - Rejecting Empty Promises

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand Him over. Matthew 26:14-16 The desire for money can become a powerful incentive to betray our Lord. In this Gospel passage, it seems clear that Judas’ betrayal was based on his desire for money. He most likely had some level of faith in our Lord, or he wouldn’t have become His disciple. But even if Judas did have some level of faith, his desire for money appeared to overshadow the faith he may have had. One of the central lessons we can learn from Judas is that the desire for money is a powerful incentive for the decisions we make. So many of the great saints have taught us that the path to holiness consists, first, in a purification of all our disordered affections. And, since one of the most powerful attachments that many struggle with is an attachment to money, this is an important desire to purify in all of our lives.

It’s true that material possessions are not evil when they are used for the fulfillment of God’s will. But the desire for more, for an excess, will always cloud our ability to see clearly the will of God and live for His glory alone. Once Judas had betrayed our Lord, and Jesus was arrested, recall that Judas “deeply regretted what he had done.” And during Jesus’ trial, Judas went back to the chief priests and said “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood” in an apparent attempt to stop the trial. But Jesus’ death was set in motion and could not be stopped. As a result, Judas returned the money and sadly went off to hang himself (See Matthew 27:3-5).

The desire Judas had for money clouded his thinking. And his sin did to him what sin always does. As soon as his sin of betrayal was done, Judas saw the consequences of that choice. And the consequences grieved him deeply. He learned that choosing sin ends with an empty promise. He realized that thirty pieces of silver was not worth the value of his soul. But of course, even then Judas could have repented and received the mercy of God. But he didn’t. He simply ended his life in ultimate despair.

Reflect, today, upon the witness of Judas. Use him as a source of meditation and self-examination this Holy Week. What is it in your life that you desire more than our Lord? What temptation clouds your thinking and leads you to choices that you know will end in emptiness? Strive to eradicate every disordered desire within you this day and choose wisely the will of God instead. Do not let yourself continue to believe the lies that keep you from making Jesus and His holy will be the one and only focus of your life.

*My divine Lord, You and You alone, must become the focus of my life. You and You alone are of the greatest value in life. Help me to shed all earthly desires in life so that I will not fall into the temptations that lead to empty promises and so that I will embrace the true and fulfilling promises that come from You. Jesus, I trust in You.*

# Thursday (Maundy Thursday)- Holy Week Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Gospel: John 13:1-15

Holy Thursday is significant because it commemorates the Last Supper, the final dinner Jesus shared with His disciples. It is also the beginning of the Triduum, which includes Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. During The Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, a symbol of humility and servant leadership, and instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist. He also predicted that one of His disciples would betray Him and all of them would abandon Him. Holy Thursday is observed in many different ways by Christians around the world, but it often involves special church services and the celebration of the Eucharist. Some churches reenact the washing of the feet ceremony as a reminder of Jesus' teachings of humility and service to others. In some countries, particularly in the Catholic tradition, it is customary to hold an all-night vigil called the "Eucharist of the Lord's Supper," in which the faithful gather to pray and reflect on the events of Holy Thursday.

Loving Provider, You gather me in this Upper Room with Your son, to be fed by Your love. At that supper, Jesus told us to "love one another" and I know that is the heart of His gift, His sacrifice for me. I ask that I might find the source of my own heart, the meaning for my own life, in that Eucharist. Guide me to the fullness of Your love and life.

*Go to [www.bowmanfrancis.org](http://www.bowmanfrancis.org) to hear Fr. Charles' Holy Thursday message.*

# Friday (Good Friday)- Holy Week Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Hebrew 4:14-16; 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

Good Friday falls on the Friday right before Easter Sunday. It marks the day of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Good Friday is considered one of the Christian year's most important and solemn days. Good Friday is significant because it marks the culmination of the events that led to the death of Jesus. According to the New Testament, Jesus was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death by crucifixion by the Roman authorities. Good Friday is typically a day of fasting, prayer, and reflection. Many Christians attend church services on this day, which often include a retelling of the events surrounding the crucifixion, hymns, prayers, and the veneration of the cross. In some countries, there are processions and reenactments of the crucifixion as a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus made for humanity. This day brings different activities that the older girls of Our Little Roses participate in. They use their creative talents to illustrate the Stations of the Cross on posters that will later be set on altars around the home. At dusk, everyone participates in the Stations of the Cross in procession around the different stations while they take turns reading the meditations and prayers.

My Lord, Your son has suffered so much, shed so much blood. I was born with so many faults, and my nature is so full of weakness, and yet Your son Jesus has died on the cross *for me*. I know Your grace has the power to cleanse me of my many sins and to make me more like Your Son. Thank You for Your goodness and love for me. I ask You, Father, to watch over me - always.

*Go to [www.bowmanfrancis.org](http://www.bowmanfrancis.org) to hear Fr. Charles' Good Friday message.*

# 2026 VIRTUAL LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

Thank you for attending THE BOWMAN-FRANCIS MINISTRY 2026 VIRTUAL LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES. We hope you gained as much spiritual gratification from attending the series as we did in organizing it.

We want to hear your thoughts and opinions so we can keep improving our logistics and content. Please help us evaluate our Bible Study Series by completing this survey. We will use your feedback to determine how we can shape our future events.

**Was this your first time participating (virtually or in-person) in a BOWMAN-FRANCIS MINISTRY event?**

YES  NO

**What were a few key takeaways from the 2026 VIRTUAL LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES?**

**Overall, how satisfied were you with the 2025 VIRTUAL LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES?**

1 = Very dissatisfied 5 = Very satisfied

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>				

**How satisfied were you with the following?**

	NOT SATISFIED	SATISFIED	VERY SATISFIED	DID NOT ATTEND
Registration Process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication E-mails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bible Study Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weekly Video Messages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Platform (ZOOM)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music Ministry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Additional Feedback**

Which sessions did you find most relevant?

(PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

	NOT RELEVANT	RELEVANT	VERY RELEVANT	DID NOT ATTEND
Ash Wednesday Message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Week 1 ZOOM Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Week 2 ZOOM Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Week 3 ZOOM Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Week 4 ZOOM Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Week 5 ZOOM Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Week 6 ZOOM Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Palm Sunday Message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holy Thursday Message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good Friday Message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easter Sunday Message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional Feedback				

How satisfied were you with the weekly session content?

1 = Very dissatisfied 5 = Very satisfied

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>				

Any additional comments regarding the weekly sessions or overall agenda?

**CULTURAL FAMILY**

Afro-Latino / Afro-Latina – AL       Asian and Pacific Islander – API

Black / African American – BAA       European American – EA

Hispanic / Latino American – HLA       Native American and Alaska Natives – NA

Prefer not to say

**AGE GROUP**

Youth (under 17)

Young Adult (18-39)

40 – 49

50 – 59

60 – 69

70 & Up

Prefer not to say

**Church Name (optional)**

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**Diocese**

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**Name (optional)**

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**E-mail Address (optional)**

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**City, STATE, Zip Code**

The Bowman-Francis Ministry would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses will remain confidential and used to improve our content, presentation, and audience.

Please mail the survey and any donations to:

The BOWMAN-FRANCIS MINISTRY  
8681 JAFFA COURT E. DRIVE APT 31  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46236

You can also complete this confidential survey online at [www.bowmanfrancis.org](http://www.bowmanfrancis.org).