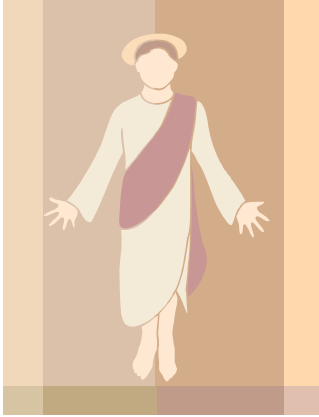


Sunday, Second Week of Lent

Genesis 12:1-4; Matthew 1:16, 18-21

“I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”



We all remember the joy of our first profession day and the fervor that gripped us as we reveled in the knowledge of God's eternal love for us. I can even recall the homily that led us to rejoice for becoming “fools for Christ.” No obstacle seemed too great to take on during those days of celebration.

Abram surely rejoiced in knowing he was God's chosen and that through him ***“all the communities of the earth shall find blessing.”*** What a legacy! And just look at Peter, James, and John, selected by Jesus to be caught up in His transfiguring moment and wanting to make permanent the ecstasy of this event.

However, there is the time after the “moment” when the curtain has fallen, the candles are extinguished, the music is silenced, and the real journey begins. Genesis tells us that ***“Abram went as the Lord directed him.”*** No doubt, each of us can personally claim this line as our years unfold before us and life becomes a journey of faith, often walked in darkness and doubt, not upon a mountain top but through a long, unending desert where we have no clue that our “yes” is making a difference. Lent brings us back to these reflections.

I often think of that desert as my driving in a car during the darkest of night with no headlights to see the oncoming pitfalls. Yet, I discover that the tail lights are working just fine, and I can see that everything behind me has fallen into perfect place with an order and a balance never perceived while back there. So I grip the steering wheel and continue to move forward.

St. Theresa of Avila once said that 98% of us attain the Kingdom through the back door. By this she means that what we come to understand about God's incredible love is so often revealed through hindsight. The reason is that we usually have all we can manage just to get through a day or a challenge or a setback that tests our faith to the core.

Therefore, St. Paul urges us to bear our ***“share our hardships . . . with the strength that comes from God”*** because God definitely has a ***“design.”*** It may be a long wait in between jubilee celebrations, but when those moments of “Tabor” come, when the veil is lifted, when we experience God is well pleased with us, we too, can whisper in our hearts, ***“Lord, it's so good to be here!”***

Catherine Marie Bazar, OP
Mission San Jose Dominicans

March 20

Monday, Second Week of Lent

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

We wonder, “How can she do that?” “What was he thinking?” “That is so like her – always looking out for number one!” O yes, we are so quick to judge. We seem to know “the better way of doing things.”

Now let us reverse our thinking. “Oops, I made a mistake! Forgive me. I am so sorry. I apologize. I just thought this was best for everyone!”

Each of us is a unique individual with special gifts. Life would be simpler if we would focus on a person’s special gifts, instead of focusing on what that person did not have or did not do. Yes, it can really be aggravating and frustrating when our expectations are not met. But what about when we fall short of what is expected of us? Just as we should not focus our energy to judge or criticize others, neither should we waste our energy beating ourselves up for our shortcomings.

Dear God, help us work together and share with everyone our gifts, whether of time, treasure, or talent. May we speak for people with no voice. And may we conserve our resources so as to share with those who have less or those without. May we be more open to the way others see or do things. Lord, thank you for your compassion and understanding.

Say prayerfully the “Our Father” for inner peace.

Julia Guerrero, OPA
Tacoma Dominican



March 21

Tuesday, Second Week of Lent Isaiah 1: 10, 16-20; Matthew 23: 1-12

It's easy when we read passages like today's to label the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day as the "bad guys" – enemies of the vulnerable, and anyone who took the side of the "little guys." Then we transfer this label to some religious and political leaders of our own time, and certainly can find plenty of evidence to back us up.

We miss the point entirely. The scribes and Pharisees weren't bad people. Jesus even said that their religious practices were worthwhile. Some of them were friends of Jesus. But they, like we, sometimes missed the point.



Photograph by Patricia Farrell, OP

Country Western songs have some titles that can make us laugh (or groan). There's "I Keep Forgettin' I Forgot about You." One reason they make us laugh is that they come so close to the truth, as in "Nobody Wants to Play Rhythm Guitar behind Jesus; Everyone Wants to Be Leader of the Band." Isn't it the truth? We keep missing the point about our call, not to be the leader of the band, but to be a servant.

There's a story about Albert Schweitzer's train arrival in Chicago before receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. While cameras flashed, he excused himself to go through the crowd and help an elderly black woman struggling with her luggage. Wow! I would have been so distracted by the cameras' flashing even to even remember there had been anyone else on the train besides me!

It's not too late into the season of Lent to begin this practice of not looking for seats of honor or opportunities to lead. I'll try this week to be intentional about being the last to be served and the last in every line (and how I hate lines!). I'd also like to practice paying attention to how Jesus' words apply to me and not just some conveniently labeled scribes and Pharisees during Lent . . . and well beyond it.

Patricia Farrell, OP
San Rafael Dominicans

Tuesday, Second Week of Lent
Isaiah 1: 10, 16-20; Matthew 23: 1-12

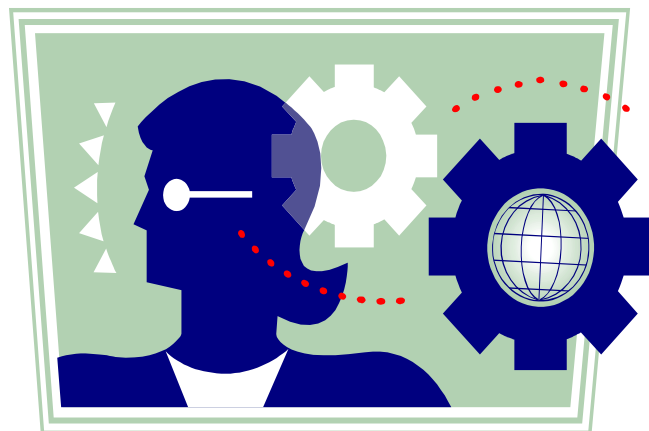
Wednesday, Second Week of Lent Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28

What is love and why do we make it so complicated and filled with contradictions? What is it about the passion of faith that can so skew our view of mission? At times we move from event to event without a care or thought while other movements require planning, plotting and scheming. Jeremiah's family had already moved from him, and now the very people of God are conspiring against him. Why? What causes caring people to move so drastically away from good? What causes us to continue that movement? Where do we stand and why? Who is supporting us and whom are we supporting?

The Romans clearly stood for their personal honor and gratification: no slouching here. If one disobeyed the law, Roman authority had clear, precise and humiliating punishment: crucifixion. Three times in the gospels Jesus described his upcoming death to the apostles and each time they were "blown away" by the very image. How could this happen when, juxtaposed against the prophets images of reward, diligence and honor, it just didn't fit a follower of Jesus? Being a believer should not incur the wrath of the Romans, but it surely did. Oh, and by the way, that same fate may be mine! Yikes, still follow Jesus? Today, would I make that same decision? Of course I do but . . .

Where am I today? Am I following or leading? Am I imbued with mission and vision or am I making my life more complicated than necessary? Do I love? Whom and what? Am I looking at my future? What exactly does it look like? Am I living out each event in my life to assure the future I envision? Plotting and planning and scheming won't assure I reach my goal....so what should I be doing? What should I be asking of God?

Pattie Bastian, OPA
Tacoma Dominicans



Thursday, Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah 17:5-20; Luke 16:19-31

This parable, mentioned only in Luke's gospel, stirs the soul. It made me think about my own, reasonably comfortable life-style. I don't know one truly poor person by name; however, I am friends with a number of middle class families. I do have a concern for the poor and that concern is often expressed in my preaching. But there is a substantial difference between being interested in a cause and being committed to that cause. For example, when you're interested in exercise, you do it when it's convenient; but when you're committed to exercise, you accept no excuses and exercise even when it is most inconvenient to do so. Sadly, it is so much easier to be interested in the poor than being committed to doing something about their lives. And yet throughout Jesus' ministry, he never allowed the "little ones" to become faceless, ignored, abandoned. And it didn't matter how busy He was!

Where does that leave all of us who are striving to be genuine disciples of Jesus? While possessions-- as an obstacle to a commitment to the poor-- is a constant theme in Luke, there is no one formula as to how a disciple is to use them. But what is a constant in the message of the Lukan Jesus is that it is not possessions in themselves that are good or evil, but what one does with them. They can either be an obstacle to discipleship, as in the case of the rich ruler (18:18-23), or they can be placed at the service of the kingdom.

This Lent, Jesus puts before us a dilemma: How generous am I willing to be in sharing my time, my energies, and my possessions? This sharing conflict often begins in childhood and follows us throughout our lives. I suppose that we shouldn't blame Luke's retelling of this parable for making our lives more complex; after all, we can't go around shooting the messenger. Ultimately, it is Jesus who speaks to us when he says:

I WAS HUNGRY and you circled the moon.
I WAS HUNGRY and you told me to wait.
I WAS HUNGRY and you set up a commission.
I WAS HUNGRY and you talked about bootstraps.
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "Machines do that kind of work now."
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "The poor are always with us."
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "Law and order comes first."
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "So were my ancestors."
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "We don't hire over 55."
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "God helps those who help themselves."
I WAS HUNGRY and you said: "Sorry, try again tomorrow." (T.T. Crabtree)



Denis Reilly, OP
Western Dominican Province

Friday, Second Week of Lent

Genesis 37: 3-28; Matthew 21: 33-46

Jesus said to them,
“Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected
has become the keystone?’”



Today’s Scriptures are woven with common threads: obedient sons sent into the way of harm, humans sold into slavery, rejection and suffering of the innocent, with a hint that there is more to be told in each story. The worst of human nature is evident in the jealousy and hatred of Joseph’s brothers, the greed of the vineyard tenants, the self-righteousness of the Chief priest and the Pharisees. It is hard not to become overwhelmed by the injustices and mean-spiritedness in both of these readings.

But clearly emerging from these stories are two figures of integrity and light, Joseph and Jesus.

To them we should look for guidance as we seek to journey our own paths. For in them we find the courage to follow dreams, a compassion for betrayers, the boldness to speak the Truth. And perhaps more importantly, we are taught about a forgiveness which can only come from our own loving God, the property owner who keeps reaching out to us in spite of our hardness of heart.

Let us ask for the courage to look at our own jealousies, perhaps even hatreds, our greeds, our attitudes of self-righteousness which may be subtly active in our own lives. May this Lenten time of refining shape us more into the images of integrity and light. And may we be aware of the strength that we have been given through our Keystone, the one sent by God to teach us love and forgiveness, so that we may find it marvelous to behold.

Cheryl Holyk, OP
Mission San Jose Dominicans

Saturday, Second Week of Lent

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

The readings today are those of consolation. They bring reminders of God's compassion and mercy. The responsorial psalm links this quality with another: "God is kind and merciful" (Ps103) . This comforting response sparked my memory. When the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, conducted a survey to ask what qualities were most important in a pastor/priest, the number one answer was that he be kind. People were less moved by theology or even spirituality: they yearned for someone with that special human quality of kindness. One response stated that even if the pastoral message were hard or unwelcome, what mattered was that it be given with compassion. The father in today's familiar story of the wayward son not only forgives: he runs out to greet his child and embraces him. He not only throws a party, but he calls for extravagant refreshments. He, like our loving God, is overwhelmingly merciful and kind.

There is a familiar anecdote about a child's prayer that underlines the beauty of this quality. She prayed, "O God, make all the bad people good, and please make all the good people nice." We are trying very hard this Lent to be good. Are we also trying to be kind? The messianic prophecies in Isaiah describe the coming redeemer as the one who does not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. To be like our model, we, too, need to eliminate all the ways we ignore, or gossip, or make judgments about those we meet or those we serve. Our Lenten call to conversion asks us to consider how we treat the broken, wounded people we encounter. Do our relationships proclaim kindness? We are committed to proclaim truth, and Paul adds "Speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). When we speak and act with patience. With tolerance, and with love, we imitate the kindness of our God.



Kay Lewis, OP
Tacoma Dominicans

March 26