

# Sunday, Third Week of Lent

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; Luke 13:1-9

## Living Water

A friend of mine converted to Judaism a few years back and I got to live some of the rituals of that journey vicariously through him. Before he could be finally received he had to take a Mikveh\* - a ritual full immersion in "living water," ideally a stream or spring. His was indoors and room-sized, but still "living" because it was flowing, not stagnant like many of our fonts. "Living water" means something special in Judaism.

The purpose of the Mikveh (or Mikvah) bath, like Jesus' baptism in the Jordan (which we celebrated a few weeks ago,) and our own baptism, (which we more likely celebrated many years ago,) is both as a sign and as the effective action of purification, reconciliation and the source of the renewal of our original At-one-ment with God and God's People. Through it we are made worthy and made one again.

This is what Jesus is offering today and everyday - the opportunity to have a personal, internal, constant guarantee of being reconciled with, and being able to live in a continually renewed state of At-one-ment with God and God's People.



Cool, huh?

As attractive as a shaded stream on a hot day. All we have to do is jump in.

And yes, he's saying it's that easy.

All we have to do is let it flow over and through us, and not try to bottle it up, or control it, or put a tap on it, so we can shut it off when it's inconvenient.

Maybe, like the Samaritan woman, we have to be really aware of our dryness, really thirsty, before we are prepared to risk the potential flood.

But isn't that what Lent is for? To take time and prepare for transformation, new life?

So feel free to take your time and think it through - Am I ready for this?

And then plan on getting really wet at the Easter Vigil this year!

Kevin Yell, OSJV  
Friend of the Tacoma Dominicans

March 27

# Monday, Third Week of Lent

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

Naaman is a leper, sick in mind as well as in body. The attitude associated with leprosy is one of shame and horror. Lepers are shunned and despised, hated by others until they hate themselves.

Naaman is a desperate man. Soon he may be recognized for what he is – a leper – and lose everything that he has and is. Perhaps it is this fear that makes him question the simple solution that Elisha gives him, “Go and wash seven times.” Naaman’s servants reason with him, and with their encouragement, Naaman does what he has been directed to do. He then rejoices in a complete healing!

What is the fear, the hidden secret, the long-held pain that binds me to a life of shame and horror, sadness and unfreedom? Does my anger, my complicated pride, my fear – all that has held me together – keep me from believing that there is a God who can heal me and make me whole?

Jesus, in the synagogue service, recalls Naaman’s story for the congregation. Naaman, a Gentile, received healing because he believed! Jesus’ challenge to those who were gathered in prayer with Him was that they were of the Chosen People, awaiting the Messiah, yet without faith in Him. Hearing Jesus speak so bluntly provoked them to anger, and He was grabbed and dragged to the cliffs, threatened with certain death.

Do I recognize God’s work and healing in my life and put my faith and trust in God?

Sister Anna Oven, OP  
Dominican Sisters of Oakford



# Tuesday, Third Week of Lent

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



*"Lord when someone wrongs me how often must I forgive? Seven times?"*

*"No, Jesus said, not seven times but seventy times seven times."*

My cousin's husband, a policeman in San Francisco, was killed in the line of duty in 1972. It was a time when many policemen were being killed similar to what we are experiencing today. The man who shot Code was found guilty and sentenced to prison. Ruth struggled for many years wrestling with what forgiveness meant and whether or not she could do it. Finally she realized that she would never forget, but she could let go of her anger. She would not let it consume her or her life. She entrusted Code's killer to God's mercy. Ruth died before the killer was eligible for parole but her two daughters learned from her and did not fight the parole.

In Jesus we have powerful examples of forgiving. We are familiar with the Scripture stories of Peter's denial, the Samaritan woman, the woman taken in adultery and Zaccheus. In forgiving them, Jesus never made them feel bad about themselves. In fact, he offered them new hope. Can we do less?

Forgiveness is the work of a lifetime. Each time we practice it, we learn a little more about ourselves, what it means to forgive, and its effect on me and those around me. Can I forgive those whom I perceive have wronged me? Can I forgive not only persons but institutions and systems that have hurt and betrayed those whom they are supposed to protect? It is a tall order, but we experience a little bit more about God's mercy, compassion and unconditional love each time we try.

*"Forgiveness is like oil in an engine. It keeps the wheels moving. Forgiveness is like gravity . . . invisible in its power, yet profound in its effects. Jesus is the ultimate symbol of forgiveness. He kept on believing in his staff."*

*Jesus, CEO by Laurie Beth Jones, page 203.*

Sharon Casey, OP  
Tacoma Dominicans

March 29

# Wednesday, Third Week of Lent

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

Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets . . . Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.”

I recently stumbled across a post-it pad sporting the tagline, “file this under the category of ‘who cares.’ ” As I read the Gospel for today, that tagline popped into my mind. Not because I think the passage is irrelevant: on the contrary it may be one of the *most* relevant. Commandment breakers, we’re told, will be called *least*. Why care? Because even these are in the Kingdom.



A cursory search of scripture, using biblegateway.com, reveals “the least” companioned by “the greatest” more often than not. The “mutuality” of the least and the greatest, as in our passage today, suggests each lives in concert with the other. They are there in the kingdom *together*. I’ve heard it said that the kingdom is “already,” and “not yet,” right here. I wonder, “How did Jesus treat the least of his time? What examples did he offer for how we are to treat the least among us?”

As Annie Dillard says, “There’s nobody here but us chickens.” We are all in it, here, together. So, what if I’m the least or the greatest? What if you are? Aren’t we called to treat *all* as children of God? Aren’t all children in need of compassionate care, love, safety and encouragement? It’s good news that Jesus embraces each person, and enfolds her into the kingdom; even if in practice they are not yet perfect.

After all, who is?

Christine Wilcox, OP  
San Rafael

# Thursday, Third Week of Lent

## Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23

Focused on temple ritual and sacrifice, the people of Judah turned a deaf ear to the warnings of the prophets. The instructions of the other prophets are not repeated in this chapter for us, but we remember them. We know Isaiah spoke of caring for widows and orphans, turning from war and setting prisoners free. Amos told them and us to let justice roll down like water. God gives Jeremiah a thankless task: preach to these people who won't listen.

Are we listening to God's word given to us through the prophets and his Son or are we, like the people of Judah, too focused on our ritual practices? Do we seek to find God in our cathedrals and ignore the needs of God's people in our streets? Do we turn a deaf ear to the prophets of our own time? Have we really listened to their pained pleas for peace and justice? Have we made serious attempts to care for our most vulnerable? Are we standing with those who take great risks for peace? When did we last visit one of our many over-crowded jails or prisons?

These are questions we need to ask ourselves as we prepare for rebirth and resurrection. This is a time for us to make choices, and Luke lets us know that half measures just won't do. "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters." (Luke 11: 23)

Mary Plante, OPA  
Tacoma Dominicans



# Friday, Third Week of Lent

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

As I was reflecting upon these two scripture passages, I couldn't stop thinking about the goodness of God and how much He loves us. Hosea was sent by God to speak to His chosen people who had gone astray. Many were living sexually immoral lives, and Hosea's own wife was caught in the act of adultery. There was also a spirit of idolatry among the people. Many, who considered themselves among the faithful, had little wooden figures that represented pagan gods in their homes to which they would pray. Although this greatly offended God, He didn't abandon them. Rather, He sent a holy man to urge them to repent and turn back to the ways of the Lord. Hosea brought with him not only a stern warning of what would happen to them if they chose not to repent, but also a beautiful promise of great peace and blessings if they did choose to repent.

Today, God's chosen people have also gone astray. Sexual immorality and its consequences are common place and even defended in our society. New Age practices have been adopted and are taught among some of the faithful. Just as in Hosea's time, God has not abandoned us, but has sent holy men to guide us on the straight path to Heaven. Our Holy Fathers Pope Benedict XV and Pope John Paul II are two such men. In Mark 12:28-34, Jesus Himself calls us to love Him with our whole heart, mind and soul. The only way we can be truly sure that we love God is to act on His Word. Lent is the perfect time to examine honestly the areas of our lives that are not in accord with the teachings of the Church, and confess them. Then, at Easter, we can present ourselves pure and holy, before Our Lord and enjoy His blessings and promises.



Mrs. Denise Harvey, OP (Laity)  
Vice President, Western Province

# Saturday, Third Week of Lent

## Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14



*For everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted.*

Today's thoughtful readings couldn't come at a better time. Our faces set in the direction of Jerusalem, steadily moving through the Lenten season, we are anticipating the powerful events that await us there. Midway on our journey, Jesus offers us a parable, a story shared in his inimitable way, one that surprises us, turning the "status quo" upside down and drawing attention to the importance of integrity in our everyday living.

Jesus introduces us to the Pharisee and the tax collector, both of whom go up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee gives thanks that he is not like other men, especially this tax collector. Standing afar off, as is the custom, the tax collector bows his head and prays for mercy. The prayer of these two men is not as expected. We witness their attitude, one filled with pride, the other with humility and immediately recognize that Jesus has, once again, provided a surprising reminder that it is our inner life, not our outer appearance that truly matters.

Today, let us look at ourselves through the lens of this thoughtful parable. As we do, we remember that we have the gift of making choices in our lives. Will we choose to strengthen our inner integrity? Will our lives reflect our dependence on God's mercy and a desire to let a humble spirit grow in us? Or will we continue to proclaim a message that we are what we have and how we look and what we do? Jesus' words hold the key to the integrity we seek--- "For everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted." May these words be alive in us as we continue on our Lenten journey.

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