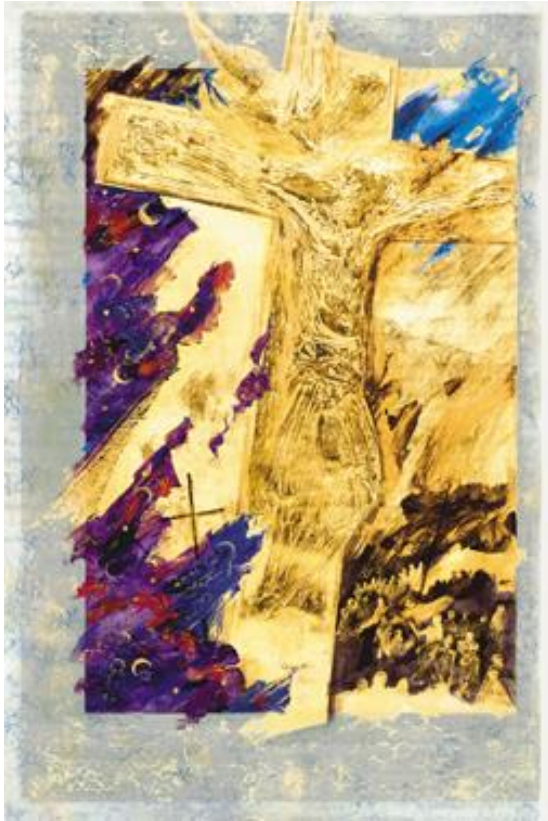


Lenten Reflections

March 15, 2019



We're almost two weeks into Lent. Have you shirked any of your disciplines yet? Snuck a piece of chocolate? Pressed "snooze" when you promised to get up early to spend extra time in prayer? Chosen to indulge in meat on a Friday? "We are shamefaced, even to this day!"

Sometimes, Lent can seem like a drudgery. There are so many disciplines to choose from, they can seem like Catholic New Year's resolutions! Instead of becoming deeply mired in our daily sacrifices, we should strive to do what will bring us closer to God.

Last year, I drastically streamlined my Lenten practices. I gave away all the little devotional books I amassed over the years. Each one was small, but together, they became a mass of every little thing I could do over the Lenten season. Instead, I was faithful to my carefully chosen Bible study for ten minutes every day. I simplified. I focused my efforts on one thing. Last Lent, I fell in love with Scripture. I listened to God speaking to me through it as I reflected on His Word every day. Some days were more fruitful than others, and I learned to be at peace with that.

Choose one thing that will draw you nearer to God. Focus on it. Do it well. Maybe it's adding one daily Mass or Adoration per week. Maybe it's reading one chapter of a Gospel every day or reading a spiritual book. Reflect on your relationship with God, seek intimacy with Him, and then look for small opportunities to serve Him. Can you stop yourself before you judge another's motivation? Can you cease condemning others' choices? Can you forgive someone? Can you offer a small mercy? Can you give, even if giving hurts a bit? Can you offer yourself grace when you fail, and can you ask God to help you get on the right track again?

At this time of year, the earth is still sleeping. The bulbs are dormant, waiting for the warmth and rains to wake them up. During Lent, give God permission to make something germinate in the silence of your soul. Open yourself up to the warmth and nourishment He wants to provide. May this slow, steady work of God gloriously burst forth in you this Easter.

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Friday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 228

Reading 1 [EZ 18:21-28](#)

Thus says the Lord GOD:

If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he committed,
if he keeps all my statutes and does what is right and just,
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

None of the crimes he committed shall be remembered against him;
he shall live because of the virtue he has practiced.

Do I indeed derive any pleasure from the death of the wicked?
says the Lord GOD.

Do I not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil way
that he may live?

And if the virtuous man turns from the path of virtue to do evil,
the same kind of abominable things that the wicked man does,
can he do this and still live?

None of his virtuous deeds shall be remembered,
because he has broken faith and committed sin;
because of this, he shall die.

You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel:

Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?

When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies,
it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.

But if the wicked, turning from the wickedness he has committed,
does what is right and just,
he shall preserve his life;
since he has turned away from all the sins that he committed,
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7A, 7BC-8](#)

R. (3) If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;

LORD, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to my voice in supplication.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?

But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

I trust in the LORD;

my soul trusts in his word.

My soul waits for the LORD

more than sentinels wait for the dawn.

Let Israel wait for the LORD.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

For with the LORD is kindness

and with him is plenteous redemption;

And he will redeem Israel

from all their iniquities.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

Verse Before The Gospel [EZ 18:31](#)

Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, says the LORD,
and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

Gospel [MT 5:20-26](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I tell you,
unless your righteousness surpasses that
of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment,
and whoever says to his brother, Raqa,
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin,
and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.
Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,

and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."