

LENT

2025



Walking
Together as
St. John XXIII
Parish

Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025

Joel 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Reflection by Karie Ferrell

“Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart.”

Even now—amid your joy or your pain, whether you are living in good health or with illness, when your faith is strong or when you’re feeling doubt.

Now is the time to heed the call to assemble!

Some of us are out in the world living a life that we know is not in keeping with the ways of righteousness.

Perhaps we have strayed unconsciously from the fold and found ourselves alone and far from home. Perhaps we feel as if the Church or its members have turned their backs on us.

There have been several times in my life when I’ve turned my back on the ways of faith by following the ways of the world—ways that looked like they would be more fun, exciting, and adventuresome or would make me more successful. Sometimes I set out on the wrong path intentionally, thinking the ways of faith were old-fashioned and out of sync with our current times.

Sometimes I was so caught up in the busyness of my own life or working so hard that I was surprised to look up and find that I was no longer part of the fold.

Each of us has our own stories of being lost. Whatever the cause—an intentional turning away or an unconscious wandering—it can be so very difficult to find the courage and the humility to make what may seem like a very long walk home. So isn’t it wonderful that the Church gives us this season of Lent?

Each year we are called to take a close look at ourselves and the lives we live. We ask ourselves, are we squandering the gifts God has given us? Are we wasting our money on things that will not satisfy? Are we making good use of our talents for the betterment of the world? Are we training ourselves to be the holy men and holy women we were created to be, or are we training

ourselves to conform to worldly values?

Now is the time, a very acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation.

So, we gather from all our ways of life, in all our diversity, in all stages of life, and in the various stages of our spiritual journeys, to be marked with the sign of our faith as we set out on our Lenten journey once again. We will be marked with the Sign of the Cross in ashes, reminding us of our mortality as we continue our journey to everlasting life.

You’ve heard the call; wake up and start the journey back home!

Come to church more often. Be courageous and find the humility to come to confession and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And, if you see someone who is lost, make the effort to reach out to them. You may be the one God will use to pick them up and return them to his fold—because each one of us is called to fullness of life in Christ.



Karie has served as the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation for St. John XXIII Parish, originally at the legacy St. Mary Parish, since July 2000. She is also an author for Liturgical Training Publications, Inc., the publishing arm of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

1st Sunday of Lent

March 9, 2025

Deut 26:4-10; Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15; Rom 10:8-13; Lk 4:1-13

Reflection by Katie Padley

This week, we will hear St. Luke's telling of the temptation of Jesus in the desert. We're coming fresh from the galvanizing and beautifully written exhortations to give up sin that we heard on Ash Wednesday: "Rend your hearts, not your garments"; "Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me"; and "Behold, now is the day of salvation!" I find these ancient words to be at once timeless and urgent, immediate, and personal; I am moved every year when I hear them proclaimed. The gospel for this day, as well, is a very practical instruction from Jesus himself on how to pray and live a life favorable to God.

And then on the first Sunday of Lent, we have this story which feels, by comparison, rhetorical and perhaps a little remote. I can understand the significance of this event in the big-picture context of salvation, but I find myself coming up short when I try to apply Jesus' example here to everyday life. For one thing, it's easy to take for granted that Jesus, being who he is, is not going to give into temptation, although we know it is important that he endure this test. For another thing, the setting of Jesus being alone in the desert with the devil is, thankfully, not especially relatable—unlike most of his ministry and teaching, which takes place around other people in more tangible settings and has more immediately applicable lessons on how to treat others and serve God in the world. Also, the temptations the devil offers do not actually seem that appealing and difficult to resist, as they range from pure showmanship to world domination (which, frankly, sounds exhausting). These particular, dramatic temptations seem far removed from the mundane and insidious ones that characterize the rest of our lives: the temptation to pettiness, to judgment, to apathy, and to inaction. We easily imagine that we'll boldly defend the faith and stand up for what's right when challenged. But ask us to forgive the colleague who's always undermining us, to

love the neighbor with the loud motorcycle, to pray sincerely for the politician we don't like—somehow, these things can feel like another matter entirely.

And so as I reread this scripture again this year, considering how Jesus' example in this passage might apply to us here and now, I think that perhaps the devil is not necessarily only tempting Jesus to a show of power for its own sake. Significantly, the devil frames his temptation with "If you are the Son of God..." He is challenging Jesus to prove his rank and status. This, then, is something we can identify with. How often are we eager to reiterate our titles and the degrees that we hold, to make sure everyone knows what schools we've attended, what important things we've done, which important people we know, and how much knowledge we hold? What might we be tempted to say or do in order to defend our status in the eyes of others?

By contrast, Jesus is sure of himself and his relationship to God. He knows that he has nothing to prove and that he does not need additional powers and status conferred upon him. We see his total confidence in God, his total humility and reliance upon God—God's words are so close to his heart that he is able to recall them even under duress. So again, we are being told in this scripture another way to return to God: relinquish our defensiveness and our impulse to prove ourselves; reenvision our sense of self to one that prioritizes our relationship to God—which will transform both the way we are able to respond to those everyday temptations and, ultimately, the way we interact with each other.



Katie has been a parishioner and member of the St. Mary Choir since 2002 and currently serves as the Liturgy Chair for St. Mary. She works as an executive assistant and has two children who are students at Pope John XXIII School.

2nd Sunday of Lent

March 16, 2025

Gen 15:5-12, 17-18; Ps 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14; Phil 3:17-4:1; Lk 9:28b-36

Reflection by Ifeanyi “Beverly” Chukwudozie

The story of Jesus’ Transfiguration is one of scripture’s most memorable and mysterious moments. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines transfiguration as “a complete change of form or appearance into something more beautiful or spiritual.” The apostles experienced a heavenly encounter. They witnessed Moses and Elijah appear, observed Jesus’ face and clothes transform, and saw His true nature as the Son of God. If I was one of the apostles who witnessed the scene, I would say the same thing as Peter: build three tents and preserve this amazing moment forever. It is typical of human nature to hold on to the beautiful and shining parts of an experience, but that may distract from the main point of the encounter or overlook the lessons learned from the journey. The apostles may have missed the conversation about what Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem. But God’s voice from the cloud reminds us that Jesus is the chosen Son and that we should listen to Him.

Jesus took His apostles up the mountain to pray. This is not the only time in the gospel that Jesus reminds the apostles to pray to prepare for a journey toward something greater than what they can immediately see. This reading reminds me to pray too, especially during the Lenten season. Jesus reminds us of the heavenly encounter that occurs when we pray. This reading also reminds me of the journey of transformation—getting through that change is not always beautiful. Liquid medication instructs us to “shake the bottle well” before taking the medicine. If we don’t shake the bottle, we may not get the best of the active ingredients that have settled at the bottom. Shaking the bottle well transforms the medication into what we need. We should see challenging situations as “shake well” periods; the “shake well” period will come with fear, uncertainty, and sometimes pain, but the outcome will get the best of us—it will be beautiful. Like a caterpillar becoming a

butterfly. Like the death and resurrection of Christ. At these “shake well” times, we are called to pray and listen, trusting and focusing on God.

The first reading demonstrates “listening” through faith. God tells Abram in his old age that he will have descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. Today, most of us have trouble believing in a promise that seems impossible. Abram did not have visible proof of the future, but he trusted God’s promise and held onto it in the face of uncertainty. This active process of faith transformed Abram into Abraham, the father of many nations. The first verse of the psalm ties the readings together nicely: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?” God’s light (seen by the apostles) guides us through it all, even the darkest, most terrifying, and most challenging times (as faced by Abram). We may have doubts, but we need faith, which means holding on to the promise, as Abraham did, or, as the apostles did, visualizing the dazzling light.

These challenging times are the worst. In January of this year, my father died. My father and I were very close and talked frequently, if not daily. The second reading reminds me that “our citizenship is in heaven,” and our lowly body will change form to be like Christ’s glorified body. These readings call me to focus on God, listen to His words, hold on to my faith, and build trust in God as I go through this period. I must pray, read the Bible, and meditate on His word daily. During this Lenten season, let us open our ears to listen to God and open our hearts to trust in the transformation He has planned for us, our families, our parish, and our community.



Beverly has been a parishioner at St. Mary Church since 2015, when she and her family moved to Evanston from Chicago. She is a lector, minister of care, and Parish Pastoral Plan steering team member.

3rd Sunday of Lent

March 23, 2025

Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15; Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11; 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12; Lk 13:1-9

Reflection by Raúl E. Marrero Rosa

The fig tree may bear fruit. If not, cut it down.

Every day is a new opportunity for you and me to enter into grace with the Lord, Our Savior. In Lent, we have the opportunity to discern from the depths of our hearts and find the places where we can minimize our division from the Holy Trinity, our Church, and our brothers and sisters. Jesus is always at the door of our hearts. He is knocking, waiting for us to repent, for us to make room for Him to live within us and shape our lives.

As St. Paul reminds the Corinthians in the second reading, we need to learn from the history of our ancestors that is in the Bible. We all need to be careful because sometimes we think we are “standing secure,” but we might not be. The Bible shows us that although our ancestors ate manna and drank the spiritual drink during their forty years of pilgrimage with Moses, many of them separated themselves from God and died in the desert out of communion with Him. But we must always be hopeful, because we know that our loving Father, who is rich in goodness and mercy, will always be there for us, waiting for the lost sheep. We always have the opportunity to enter into grace with God. That opportunity is today: the opportunity to open the door to Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins through reconciliation.

We, as the People of God, are walking in this historical moment to finally unite with God in Heaven. He wants us not to point fingers but to work on our own process of repentance through prayer. If you are free of sin, throw the first stone. Jesus makes no distinction of sins, as He tells the crowd in today's gospel: Do you think that because they suffered in this way, they were a greater sinner than all the others? He says that their suffering had nothing to do with sin. It was not cause and effect. But He says that if we do not repent, we will likewise lose our communion with God.

Like the man with the fig tree in his orchard, He is checking our status every day. Are we bearing fruit where we are planted? Are we living in grace with Jesus Christ? Every day, God is cultivating the ground around us and fertilizing us, waiting to see if we return to Him and begin to bear fruit. Still, we do not know if we will have one more day—or if this is the day we will meet our end in the desert like our ancestors.

This third Sunday of Lent, like every day, is a good day to consciously think about our relationship with God and with our neighbors. It's a good day to seek the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that the fig tree receives grace and begins to bear fruit. Let us pray for community, for less division and harshness. Let us pray for help finding forgiveness for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters who are or could be a part of the Body of Christ. Let us pray for the unity of our local church, St. John XXIII, and the Catholic Church.

The 2025 Jubilee opens the door for us to be “pilgrims of hope,” to start again, seeking forgiveness for those sins which—although we may have already repented for our part—may have scarred the lives of others. The Jubilee is God cultivating the roots and fertilizing the soil around the fig tree of the universal Church. Go, be a pilgrim of hope! Jesus is inviting you to walk a new path to be with Him.

We also extend our prayers to our shepherd, Pope Francis, who, at the time of writing, is undergoing treatment for pneumonia.



Raúl has been a parishioner at St. John XXIII for eight years. Originally from Puerto Rico, this parish became a place for him to serve and learn from diverse cultures. He serves in many liturgical ministry roles and as a catechist and youth minister.

4th Sunday of Lent

March 30, 2025

Josh 5:9a, 10-12; Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

Reflection by Juan Pablo León Rojas

As we celebrate Laetare Sunday, we are invited to rejoice in the midst of our Lenten journey. It is a Sunday that encourages us to reflect on hope, joy, and the merciful love of God, which is always available to us, even when we may feel undeserving.

The readings for this Sunday offer profound insights into God's perspective, one that sees beyond appearances. In 1 Samuel 16, we hear of the anointing of David, where God reminds Samuel, "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart." This powerful message speaks directly to the ways we often judge others and ourselves based on external standards. How often do we overlook or misjudge people because of their appearance, background, or past mistakes? In contrast, God sees beyond all of this and looks into the heart, seeing the potential for holiness that we may miss.

The parable of the Prodigal Son brings this truth to life in a beautiful way. I personally connect with this story, having experienced moments in my own life where I've felt like the younger son: lost, broken, and unworthy of mercy. There have been times when I expected judgment and rejection, especially from those I loved most. I remember a moment in my life when I thought my father might turn me away, just as the younger son must have feared when he returned home. Instead, my father greeted me with open arms, with a hug that washed away my guilt and brought me to tears of joy. That embrace is a small reflection of the far greater embrace we receive from God when we turn back to Him in repentance.

This Sunday's readings challenge me (and perhaps you) to reflect on how I view myself and others. Like the older son, I've sometimes struggled with resentment when others who I think don't deserve mercy receive it. But God's mercy is not about fairness in our human sense. It

is about a love that seeks the lost, the broken, and the repentant. The father's actions in the parable remind us that God always welcomes us back, no matter our past.

For our parish community, these readings remind us that we must strive to look beyond superficial judgments and embrace one another with the same mercy that God shows us. This is not an easy task. It requires humility, forgiveness, and the willingness to see each other as God sees us—not defined by our mistakes or imperfections, but by the potential for holiness in every heart. In doing so, we become a stronger, more unified people of faith, growing together in the love and mercy of Christ.

As St. John Chrysostom said, "When we see our brother, we see the Lord." Let us reflect on this truth and carry it with us in our daily lives. May we be quick to forgive, slow to judge, and always ready to welcome others with open arms, just as our merciful Father welcomes us back.



Juan Pablo is a devoted Catholic with a deep passion for theology, teaching, and spiritual growth. He seeks to inspire others through faith, knowledge, and thoughtful reflection.

5th Sunday of Lent

April 6, 2025

Is 43:16-21; Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6; Phil 3:8-14; Jn 8:1-11

Reflection by Karl Solis

I once heard a former pastor of mine offer an unwritten epilogue to today's Gospel reading.

There are numerous episodes in the Gospel where Jesus outwits the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus, of course, sets a high standard, but today's reading is truly one of His finest moments. After Jesus says, "let the one who has never sinned cast the first stone" (John 8:7), the Pharisees and scribes are clearly stumped, and they start walking away one by one.

And now comes the *unwritten, unofficial* twist: while Jesus is still stooped writing in the dust, a little pebble flies over His shoulder. He is a bit startled, and He turns around to see who may have possibly dared to cast that little stone. Lo and behold, it is His mother Mary—the only other human being without sin. She chuckles gently after seeing that she outsmarted her Son this one time. Sweet payback for the stress He caused her when He wandered away at the Temple as a 12-year-old...

Kidding aside, let's focus on the main character of this gospel reading, the woman caught in adultery. After seeing that no one in the crowd stayed behind to condemn her, Jesus tells her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more" (John 8:11).

These are incredibly gracious and merciful words uttered by our Lord. He does not tell the woman, "You did nothing wrong," or, "Don't worry about what you did." Jesus simply states that He does not condemn her and that she has been spared the punishment. But more importantly, He explicitly tells her not to sin anymore. Our Lord showed this woman a very profound grace, but He held firm in calling her adultery what it was: a moral failure, which should not be repeated.

"Go, and from now on do not sin any more." There is a definitive, forward-looking tone in Jesus' statement.

That forward outlook is also echoed in passages from the other readings for today:

Remember not the events of the past; the things of long ago, consider not; see, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

To each of us as individuals, I believe the takeaway is that—while we can and should learn from the past—once we turn to the Lord, we are no longer bound to the things we have done. Instead of being chained by our mistakes or past sins, He calls us to move forward, knowing that we carry this mighty gift of His forgiveness.

For us as a collective parish, I also find these passages quite practical as we journey to unite our new community. I believe the Lord is telling each of us to not be constrained by an attitude of "This is how we've always done it at this church." Instead, He calls on all of us to always look forward, to build and do new, bigger, and better things as one people: "the people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise" (Isaiah 43:21).



Karl and his wife Farah have been parishioners at St. Mary since 2001. He is a cantor and choir member, and he serves on the Winter Parish Party Committee. His daughter Charlene attended Pope John XXIII School and is currently a freshman at UCLA.

Palm Sunday

April 13, 2025

Lk 19:28-40; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Lk 22:14-23:56

Reflection by Peg Hanrahan

Palm Sunday begins in triumph and ends in tragedy. As we begin Holy Week and our meditation on the Passion of Our Lord, the scriptures proclaimed tell of deep-seated faith. They speak of a secure refuge in God's love and human friendship, on creation's ultimate destiny—from life, through death, to the sure and certain hope of resurrection glory.

Yet in the midst of redemption's victorious march, betrayal lurks. Feelings of abandonment arise and threaten. As salvation's promise ripens, violence also ascends. Legitimate religious and secular authority, manipulated by envy and greed, stoke the flames of fear and hate, fall from grace, and shatter. In this moment of intense human vulnerability, love takes great risks. In the face of unspeakable cruelty, amid a radical emptiness, total, unyielding trust prevails. This is the story of the Passion, the mysterious route of paschal living. And in Luke's rendition, at the core of the story is the irrepressible presence of mercy.

Growing up in the rough and tumble of a large family, I learned some of the key lessons reflected in the Passion narrative. Love bestows both triumph and tragedy to an open heart. Through years of reinforcement, seizing on the countless opportunities parenting provides, my Mom and Dad taught us that we were not the center of the universe. I can still hear my mother saying, "It's not all about you!" (usually when I had just acted as if it was). I often call to mind a familiar lecture in our house, one that generally started with, "Everywhere you go, you will find givers and takers..."; I commit myself again to give more than I take. I will always remember my father's insight that "kindness is a gift that costs you nothing to give and one desperately needed in a sore world." Kindness is not the first word that comes to mind when contemplating the Passion, but if you look for it, you'll find it in abundance, especially in the Gospel of Luke.

I learned in that household that no one escapes suffering; it is part of the human condition. In the words of my Irish grandmother, "Life has a way of bringing ye to yer knees. We all have crosses to bear, but sure God never gives you a cross without the grace to carry it." The Irish are big on crosses and grace, both blessings in disguise given to us as a way to foster humility and a reliance on divine love.

As we begin Holy Week, hearing again the story of the Passion, let us remember that through the grace of baptism, we enter into the defining rhythms of the Paschal mystery. In the sacrament of Confirmation, we, like the crucified One, choose to commend our spirits into the hands of God. Let God's Word encourage us to again embrace God's way, gratefully immersing ourselves in the blessings and heartbreaks of loving. May Christ's example embolden us to take the risks and make the sacrifices loving requires, knowing that God's way does not release us from pain and loss—suffering and sacrifice are essential elements of love. Following in our savior's footsteps, let us "not regard equality with God something to be grasped" (Philippians 2:6), and humbly accept both the desolation of the tomb and the glory of the resurrection. Like the one Isaiah speaks of in the first reading, let us not rebel or turn back in the face of our own personal Passion experiences but set our faces like flint, placing our trust in the all-encompassing mercy of God.



Peg recently retired after 48 years as a professional lay minister in both parish and Archdiocesan settings across the Chicago area. She is delighted to be able to spend more time writing, gardening, volunteering, entertaining, and traveling.

Easter Triduum

Holy Thursday | Good Friday | Holy Saturday | Easter Sunday
April 17 April 18 April 19 April 20

Reflection by Dianne Fox

As I reflect upon Jesus' journey—entering the gates of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the time in the garden, his crucifixion, and the anticipation of his resurrection—I try to see it not as a retelling. Rather, I try to experience it in “real time,” picturing at every moment what Jesus is doing and what he must be feeling. I wonder what it must have been like to be betrayed—and even what it must have felt like to be the betrayer. I imagine the disciples' thoughts as they heard what must have seemed to be very cryptic words from Jesus on the night before he died. I think of Peter's denial and pray that I am never be put to such a test, and if I am, that I might respond with greater courage. I struggle with the pain Mary felt as she watched her son suffer, and I feel the sorrow Jesus must have carried as he said goodbye to his mother.

If I had to choose, I would say that Holy Thursday is my favorite day of the Triduum. It is all about the Mass—how can anything be greater than that? When we hear the words of consecration, it is truly in “real time”:

On the day before he was to suffer, he took bread in his holy and venerable hands, and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God, his almighty Father, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying: “TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT, FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.”

What must the disciples have thought at that moment? What was Jesus thinking? He must have been afraid. He must have felt sadness at leaving his friends. He must have been overwhelmed with so many human emotions. And that, I think, is why I love Holy Thursday so much—because we see Jesus at one of his most profoundly human moments.

On Palm Sunday, we lead Jesus with palms raised high,

joyfully shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Then on Holy Thursday, at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Celebration, we lead him in solemn procession to the Altar of Repose. The moment when the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle, as voices unite in “Pange Lingua” and “Tantum Ergo,” is deeply moving. The very atmosphere of the church changes—voices hush, people kneel in silent prayer. It is the beginning of a powerful three-day journey. At that moment, Easter Sunday, with its radiant joy, bright flowers, and faces full of hope, still feels far away. In that moment, we are the people who follow Jesus to Calvary, not fully understanding what is to come.

But we need to make the whole journey. If we do not walk the path to Calvary, we cannot fully recognize Jesus on Easter morning—or in our everyday lives, as he walks beside us. This is why he willingly entered those gates on Palm Sunday, knowing full well what awaited him. In fulfilling God's promise by dying and rising, he also assured us that he would walk with us—through our joys, our fears, our sorrows, and our pain.

May this Triduum be a journey that brings you closer to Jesus. May it open your heart to see all that he does for you each day. May you recognize yourself in those he encountered along the way—the strong and the weak, the faithful and the fearful, the confused and the grieving. For we are all of these.

As the saying goes, “It's not the destination, but the journey.”



Dianne is the Director of Liturgy and the St. Mary Campus Director of Music Ministry. She has been involved in music and liturgy for over 40 years. With her husband Joel, she has two adult children, Laura and James, and two grandchildren.

LENT 2025

Ash Wednesday - Wednesday, March 5

St. Mary - 8 a.m. (English) | 12 p.m. (English) | 7 p.m. (English)

St. Nicholas - 8:15 a.m. (English) | 5 p.m. (Bilingual) | 7 p.m. (Spanish)

Reconciliation Service - Monday, March 31

St. Nicholas - 7 p.m. (Bilingual) | Examination of Conscience on page 12

Holy Thursday - Thursday, April 17

Mass of the Lord's Supper | St. Mary - 7 p.m. (Bilingual)

Good Friday - Friday, April 18

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion | St. Nicholas - 7 p.m. (Bilingual)

Holy Saturday - Saturday, April 19

Morning Prayer and OCIA Preparation Rites | St. Nicholas - 8 a.m.


Easter Vigil | St. Nicholas - 8 p.m. (Bilingual) | Reception to follow

Easter Sunday - Sunday, April 20

Normal Sunday Masses at both churches

Haitian Mass | St. Mary - 12 p.m.

Full calendar, small group registration, and more at stjohn23evanston.org/lent



*So they took his body down.
The man who said he was
the resurrection and the life
was lifeless on the ground now.
The sun went down.
The Sabbath faded.
The Holy Day was done
and all creation
waited...*