



# *Put Your Mercy On!*



*Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community  
Lenten 2019  
Reflection Booklet*



Dear Mercy Community,

Having celebrated 175 years of Mercy in the United States, we women and men in Mercy – our Sisters, Associates, Companions, Staff – move along on this Journey of Oneness. What a blessing it is in this journey to continue to be awed and amazed at the gifts that exist among us for the good of all.

It is this joyful spirit that invites us to embark on our Lenten journey together being nourished and challenged by the reflections that are written and offered to us by members of our own Mercy family. Just as our first CLT letter (July 2018) invited all of us to discover profound and creative ways to “Put our Mercy on,” this beautifully crafted Lenten booklet offers a way of both building and being bridges of shared understanding, forgiveness, reconciliation and inclusion through the Mercy lens of its multiple authors. Instead of dreading a Lenten season that conjures images of giving up things, let us imagine ways of coming together as a diverse community striving to enliven our understanding of what it means to be Mercy in our world today.

As we travel through these 40 days, what mysteries remain to be unearthed by our women and men in Mercy? What gatherings can we imagine that allow us to explore the Scripture readings of the season and to discover the many ways that God is present to us in each other, in our many encounters with others, in the world around us that holds out a constant invitation to “Put our Mercy on” for the sake of our mission?

As a CLT we are blessed to have Sister Joy Clough, RSM, as the collector and editor of this unique Lenten consideration. We are truly indebted to her and all those who contributed to this booklet.

We are pleased to offer you this special Lenten reflection booklet. Let us hold each other in prayer and affection on our Lenten journey.

*Sue Ana Maria Margaret Mary Maria Pez*

Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community Team



Wednesday, March 6, 2019

ASH WEDNESDAY

Today's Scripture:

Jl. 2: 12-18; Ps. 51: 3-6, 12-14, 17  
2 Cor. 5: 20-6: 2; Mt. 6: 1-6, 16-18

## A Matter of the Heart

Standing on the threshold of the Lenten season, we are urged to "Put your Mercy on." Today's readings emphasize that this is not a mere donning of an exterior outfit. It is not like Harry Potter's cloak of invisibility to be shrugged on in emergencies. Rather, it is a matter of transforming my stony heart.

The readings run like a mantra – "*Rend your hearts, not your garments*"; "*A clean heart create for me*"; "*If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*" This is not exterior makeup, but a deep, interior revolution!

Though I mark my face with ashes, I am to let joy shine through. Like the early Christians, I am urged to *anoint my head and wash my face, so that I may not appear to be fasting*. I am to put Mercy on from the inside out so God's signature can be read in me.

How many Lents have I observed only to find myself once again living as monotonously ordinary in Ordinary Time? Daunted by the prospect of 40 days ahead, I pray with the psalmist, "*A willing spirit sustain in me,*" seeking a change only God can bring about in me.

In this truly acceptable time, let us "not receive the grace of God in vain." At the threshold together we pray: *Create for us clean Mercy hearts, and a merciful, steadfast spirit renew within us.*

Anne Chester, RSM

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Thursday, March 7, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Dt. 30: 15-20; Ps. 1: 1-4, 6  
Lk. 9: 22-25

## Choose Life

*"I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice and holding fast to him."*

Every day we are called upon to make choices. Some are small – like what to wear for the day – and others are life changing – like what do I choose to do in life. As a young woman, after much deliberation, I chose to join the Sisters of Mercy. That choice was not a one-time thing.

As Sisters of Mercy, how will we "Put our Mercy on" as we reflect on our Critical Concerns? What is important are not the answers but the questions: How do we see ourselves in relation to immigration, racism, Earth, women, and nonviolence? Do we feel challenged to respond by doing our part – praying, listening, and acting?

I chose to work on the Apache Indian reservation as one of my actions. I hoped to bring them some of my gifts and talents, but now I feel I was the one on the receiving end of their love and compassion. I learned so much about their suffering and sacrifice as a people. For them, tribe, culture, tradition and Mother Earth are treasures to be passed to the next generation.

Spirit, inspire us as Sisters of Mercy to know the needs and discover how to help serve where most needed in the world.

Annette Fiala, RSM

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**Friday, March 8, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Is. 58: 1-9; Ps. 51: 3-6, 18-19*  
*Mt. 9: 14-15*

## **A New Austerity**

As I began to reflect on today's Lenten readings, we were celebrating here in Argentina the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Medellin, the conference of Latin American and Caribbean bishops called to implement the Vatican II vision of the Church and its relationship to the world. In that moment, the "fasting" that represented adherence to rules and structures that bind was replaced by a new kind of austerity – walking with the poor and exploited. There was a sense that the Bridegroom was very much present in the march of liberation, or the "faith with one's feet," of the People of God.

On my entry into the Peruvian reality in 1985, I was so impacted by efforts to truly incarnate these words of Isaiah: *Do you not know what is the fast that makes me happy? Loose the chains of injustice, untie the yoke, free those enslaved and eliminate every kind of oppression.*

The vision of Vatican II and Medellin may have been dimmed by forces of evil, rigidity and disillusionment, but the kind of hope expressed in our own Mercy documents has prevailed.

Our 2017 Chapter affirmation that "the impoverishment of peoples, the devastation of Earth, and oppressive social norms and systems call us to act" places us firmly on the path of this new austerity, the fast pleasing to our God who, when we call, answers: *"Here I am!" "Dios está aqui."* God is indeed with us in this fast of mercy and compassion.

Deborah Watson, RSM

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**Saturday, March 9, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Is. 58: 9-14; Ps. 86: 1-6*  
*Lk. 5: 27-32*

## **Accept the Invitation**

*"The Lord will guide you always...He will renew your strength."*

What a promise! Through the words of Isaiah, God is inviting us – inviting the world – to Mercy. For isn't this exactly what we are called to do? Isn't this how you have been living your life? OK, so maybe you didn't get it right all the time. Or your actions have become rote and seem far from new and exciting. Perhaps you feel as if you are living in that "parched land," and that the promises alluded to here are not for you.

Well, if you are exhausted, then you don't have much to give others. And that has to change. Now is a good time for you to "Put your Mercy on"! Let's put it on like we have never done before. Let's go deeper than we ever have. How do you do that? First, forgive yourself for being human and getting tired. Next, leave fear, doubt and anxiety at the threshold. Summon courage and integrity as you cross over into a new day. Now that you've renewed yourself, you'll have that indefatigable fortitude necessary to minister to others with the love and strength necessary to see them to the next level.

There are times when you will be called upon to go, seemingly, into the depths of hell to pull someone to the light. Fear not; you are well-clad for whatever comes your way. You see, putting on Mercy is spiritual; the results are tangible. Accept the invitation, "Put your Mercy on" and claim the promises of God.

Angela Hicks, Associate

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**Sunday, March 10, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Dt. 26: 4-10; Ps. 91: 1-2, 10-15*  
*Rom. 10: 8-13; Lk. 4: 1-13*

## **Sundays: Special and Different**

It's Sunday! The first Sunday *of* Lent, but not *in* Lent. Try the math for yourself: There are 40 days in Lent, not counting the Sundays. So, yes, you can eat candy today and not break your Lenten resolution!

Well, maybe candy wasn't your resolution. Maybe you focused a bit more on prayer or community or compassion or simplicity of life. Maybe you thought you'd step up the ways in which you "Put your Mercy on," as our leadership team has invited us to do. Still, since Sundays are *of* but not *in* Lent, this reflection book will step out of the usual flow of Lenten reflections each week and invite us to something different. Sundays will be special.

**Special:** A Sunday exploration in music. A Sunday sitting with art.

**Different:** A Sunday Evensong service. A Sunday brunch!

Yes, Sundays will have a distinctive character, and in the case of this first Sunday, that character is rather mundane. This might be called planning Sunday, a time to look ahead and a time for a few practical points.

### **Looking Ahead**

Making a couple Sundays special this Lent may take some pre-planning for each of us. Consider the Evensong service offered for March 17 – yes, St. Patrick's Day, but also the second Sunday of Lent. Or the Sunday brunch on March 31 – Laetare (Rejoice) Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent. In both cases, "Put your Mercy on" has a communal flavor, an invitation to reach out to a few others to name a time and place for Evensong or to meet for brunch. Also in both cases, we grow in our experience of community as we share with one another some of the insights sparked by the previous week's

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reflections. So, on this first Sunday, some hospitable outreach and a little planning may serve to make future Sundays truly special.

### **Practical Points**

It is possible that some of the Sunday Scripture citations will not match what you hear at Mass on a given Sunday. Parishes that are following the RCIA process have the option on certain Lenten Sundays to choose alternate readings suitable for the RCIA rituals. Similarly, during the last two weeks of Lent, there is a set of alternate readings that may be used for one weekday in each of those weeks. The Scripture citations and reflections in this booklet use the regular Sunday and weekday readings, not any of these optional alternates.

While all the scriptural citations for each day appear at the top of each page, the writers of our Lenten reflections had the option to focus on a single or a combination of their day's Scriptures – however the Spirit led them.

As the Spirit leads you, you may want to jot a few reflective thoughts of your own. Some blank pages at the end of this booklet provide some space for such journaling.

### **First Sunday**

As today's reading from Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us, "What does Scripture say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." May this reflection booklet – a gift not only from the CLT but also from our Sisters, Associates, and others of our Mercy WMW Community – enliven that word within and among us this Lent. May we, then, speak of it, act in accord with it and "Put our Mercy on" in service to others, as we journey together toward Easter.

Joy Clough, RSM

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**Monday, March 11, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Lv. 19: 1-2, 11-18; Ps. 19: 8-10, 15*  
*Mt. 25: 31-46*

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## How to Measure a Life

There are many ways to measure the success of a life: length of days, the value of one's investment portfolio, the summary of one's academic or professional achievements. Perhaps these are the ways the world evaluates a person's accomplishments and honors them accordingly. But God measures our lives by very different and far simpler criteria: how much we have loved and how well we have used the gifts we have been given.

In Jesus' parable for this first Monday of Lent, feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked and visiting the sick are of utmost importance. They are best accomplished as a matter of daily routine and without seeking reward. Such are the moments of grace that don't win medals or grab headlines. What's the big deal about a kind word, or a knock on the door, or going out of your way, or listening patiently or treating someone with respect? The only reason for doing these things is a genuine concern for people in need.

Perhaps no one else will take note, but for Jesus, these acts of faith make all the difference. For Jesus, the true measure of life is not the critical but the casual moment, not the big but the little things.

Father Bill Malloy, Associate

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**Tuesday, March 12, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Is. 55: 10-11; Ps. 34: 4-7, 16-19*  
*Mt. 6: 7-15*

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## An Invitation to Grace

*"For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."*

As we enter the 40-day journey of the suffering and passion of Jesus Christ, we are invited to "Put our Mercy on" as we walk with our suffering Lord in our prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Let our Mercy words and actions go forth with passion and conviction, and not return to us void!

Let us invite one another to 40 days of grace. Let us deepen our relationships with one another and with those with whom we minister. Let us journey together in Mercy!

Let us take a set time to sit in a quiet place to *seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near*. Let us turn to the Lord in mercy, to our God who is generous and forgiving, to be filled with his grace.

Amen.

Cristina Caballero, RSM

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Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Jon. 3: 1-10; Ps. 51: 3-4, 12-13, 18-19  
Lk. 11: 29-32

## No Doubt about God's Mercy

In today's Old Testament reading, we find ourselves in the second act of Jonah's three-act story. This is his post-fish episode and pre-"I'm so angry I could die" experience. Jonah is asked to deliver a message to the Ninevites and this time, he quickly obeys.

Nineveh is very large and before the first day is over, people are hearing Jonah's prophecy and repenting of their evil ways. The word gets to the king who orders all people and beasts to put on sackcloth and ashes. Poor cows! There is a lot of vivid imagery of people, prophet and king taking the prophecy to heart and obeying God's word. Can you imagine the scene? How do you image yourself in this story?

Perhaps you are the prophet – reluctantly saying the hard words you are compelled to say but the community doesn't want to hear. Perhaps you are one of the first to hear the message, believe in God and immediately take action. Are you the king – the one with power and authority, who commands everyone to take action? Maybe you are the one who acts only after the king first rises from his throne to take his place among the people in the ashes. Or do you see yourself differently?

No matter who you are in this or in our Mercy story, we must hear the Word, believe, repent and take action. We, unlike the king, cannot have any doubt about God's mercy.

Jeanine Tisot, RSM

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Thursday, March 14, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Est. C: 12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps. 138: 1-3, 7-8  
Mt. 7: 7-12

## Called to Trust, to Be

We want so much. We need so much. We are a society preoccupied with the ways and means of getting what we need. More than that, what we want. Often we're fearful that what others have or get may keep us from having what we want. Jesus tells us the answer to our doubt, our fear and our need is simply to trust. To have hope founded on faith that God loves us like a father – and more than a father.

Over centuries Christians have dealt with this experience. How do we know and focus on what is essential? Augustine spoke of being made by God for God, with hearts uneasy until they rest within God. Pascal wrote of a "God-shaped hole" within us. And Jesus keeps saying we do not need to keep trying to fill the hole or make an artificial peace.

We are simply called to trust and have hope in God's generosity, providence and mercy. But here's the catch: receiving all this goodness *from* God should make us *like* God. Jesus says *we* are to be God's generosity, providence and mercy, bringing hope to the world.

The Recommitment document of 2017, "Called to New Consciousness," begins with a prayer: "God of Mercy...who do you desire us to be now for one another and for our suffering world?" Then, it shares possibilities for Sisters and Associates.

It's time to "Put our Mercy on"!

Susan Davidson, Associate

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**Friday, March 15, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Ez. 18: 21-28; Ps. 130: 1-5, 7-8*  
*Mt. 5: 20-26*

## **Mercy for Mercy**

The psalmist reminds us of God's mercy:

*"If you kept a record of our sins, Lord,  
who could stand their ground?  
But with you is forgiveness."*

Matthew tells us likewise to be merciful to others, to forgive them and be reconciled with them. On an even deeper level, to refrain from being angry with them in our hearts or calling them judgmental names.

This is wise counsel in these times of political division, heated arguments and hate-filled speeches, when our love and compassion for others is often tested, sometimes daily. But when we fail, we can also be assured of our Beloved's mercy and forgiveness.

It helps me to remember that all of creation is the Cosmic Christ, reminding me to treat all with compassion and mercy, not just other humans but plants and animals and inanimate beings too. In my effort to live with this awareness, I regularly say this prayer:

To see as God sees.  
To know as God knows.  
To love as God loves.

During this Lenten season may we allow the mercy of the compassionate Christ to flow through each of us.

Barbara Blake, RSM

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**Saturday, March 16, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Dt. 26: 16-19; Ps. 119: 1-2, 4-5, 7-8*  
*Mt. 5: 43-48*

## **A People Consecrated to God**

In the Scripture readings each Lent, God offers us an invitation to renew the covenant of our baptism to co-mission with Jesus. God also provides us with guidelines to help us in this ministry, and Jesus simplifies these guidelines in the words, *"Love your neighbor as yourself."*

In her keynote address at our Assembly last April, Sister Elizabeth Davis, RSM, challenged us, as Sisters, Associates, Companions and co-ministers of Mercy, to "live in the pain of others."

Jesus, on the cross, lives in our pain but how do we live in the pain of others? Years back, as I was praying with Caryll Houselander's reflections on the Way of the Cross, I suddenly became aware of the presence of the suffering Christ in all humanity.

Where do I find myself with suffering humanity? How do I "Put my Mercy on"? Am I among the women who weep? Am I like Simeon who is somewhat pushed to help Jesus carry the Cross? Do I, like Veronica, risk breaking through the condemning crowd to wipe Jesus' face or do I stay safely in the background and remain silent? Am I willing to enter the pain of mothers who watch their children die or who grieve the loss of husbands and children "disappeared"?

During this Lent let us pray for the courage and commitment to "Put our Mercy on" and to "live in the pain of others."

*"You yourself have made your precepts known. May my behavior be constant in keeping your statutes."*

Eileen Mary O'Connor, RSM

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**Sunday, March 17, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Gen. 15: 5-12, 17-18; Ps. 27: 1, 7-9, 13-14*

*Phil. 3: 17-4: 1; Lk. 9: 28-36*

## **EVENSONG: Transfiguration, Change**

This Sunday brings a change to our reflections as we are invited to gather with others for Evensong and to share communally something of our personal reflections this past week. Let us pray:

### **Invocation \***

Leader: Jesus – Moses and Elijah gave witness that you are the promised one of God.

All: With Peter, John and James make us witnesses to your glory.

**Psalm 27**      *Refrain: The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?

The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?

*Refrain.*

Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me.

Of you my heart speaks; you, my glance seeks.

Hide not your face from me. You are my helper, cast me not off.

*Refrain.*

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted and wait for the Lord.

*Refrain.*

### **Scripture Reflection**

Today's readings, and even the feast of St. Patrick, focus on transfiguration or change. Abram is changed by the covenant he makes with the Lord God. St. Paul reminds the Philippians that their faith has changed them into citizens of heaven. Jesus is transfigured, his usually hidden glory shining forth; and the apostles are changed

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by what they witness. And St. Patrick? The story of his life is full of change – his changes and the changes he inspired in others.

Change can come abruptly or gradually. It can be exciting or frightening. It usually requires courage. It often has unforeseen consequences. Ironically, change is an unchanging part of life.

### **Quiet & Sharing**

Let us sit quietly with a few questions and then enjoy one another's insights.

What's changing in you or for you this Lent?

What thought, word, or insight in one of the reflections of this past week refreshed or changed or transfigured some aspect of your prayer, your thoughts, your actions or your life?

What changes might help you (or us) to better "Put our Mercy on"?

### **Prayer \***

Jesus, beloved Son, you are the one to whom God urges us to listen. Heeding what we may hear in prayer or in our service of others may call us to change – to changes of attitude or activity or patterns of life. Help us, time and again, to "Put our Mercy on." As Catherine urged us, may our times of prayer give us the grace, strength, and animation we need for our ministry to others and may our experiences in service of our neighbors draw us back to you in prayer. This we ask humbly and sincerely. Amen.

### **Blessing \***

Abram – changing to become Abraham – enliven our faith. Amen.  
Peter, James and John – changed by a new vision of Jesus – enliven our trust. Amen.

Jesus – transfigured on the mountain – enliven our love in prayer and in action. Amen.

Joy Clough, RSM

\* Adapted from *Intercessions of Mercy*, page 282.

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**Monday, March 18, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Dn. 9: 4-10; Ps. 79: 8-9, 11, 13*  
*Lk. 6: 36-38*

### How about...?

For me our Gospel today goes straight to the heart of how we might "Put our Mercy on" in community. How? It seems pretty obvious – by being merciful as our God is merciful, by not judging others, by not condemning others, by forgiving others, by giving to others all that we can give.

And our motivation is not so that God will do these things for us but because we believe being merciful is how God really is – and we would like to be, to live like that.

But how do we not judge? Are we not critical thinkers who draw conclusions and make decisions? How can we be truly merciful as our God is merciful? What about situations where, from our perspective, it seems that someone in community is not "Putting her Mercy on"?

Maybe in these situations we could "judge" the actions but not leap to personal conclusions about the person involved. Maybe we could give another the benefit of the doubt. Maybe we could trust in the good will of the other.

What do you think? How would **you** finish the sentence "Maybe I could...."?

How about ending all conclusions, no matter what they may be. How about just being present and listening? How about giving the other a full measure, a generous helping of love?

How do you think **you** could really live in community and always "Put your Mercy on"?

Gloria Heese, RSM

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**Tuesday, March 19, 2019**

**FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*2 Sm. 7: 4-5, 12-14, 16*  
*Ps. 89: 2-5, 27, 29; Rom. 4: 13, 16-18, 22*  
*Lk. 2: 41-51 OR Mt. 1: 16, 18-21, 24*

### The Man Who Listened to Angels

We know very little about Joseph other than he was a husband, father and carpenter, and that he listened to angels.

For me, angels often visit in the form of a still, small whisper that the soul hears and the heart understands. The angels Joseph heard whispered to him to marry, flee and later to return home. Perhaps these are the messages of angels: to love, to act and to trust. Joseph showed us how to love without reserve when he took Mary to be his bride, taught us how to act without hesitation when he took his family and fled to Egypt and demonstrated to us how to trust explicitly when he was told to return home.

We don't know much about Joseph and we don't know much about angels. Some people wonder if angels exist at all; others understand them as spirits or ghosts; and some have come to accept angels as a kind of spiritual intuition. Could angels be the educators of the soul – those entities that help us come to know truth, react to injustice, work with mercy and love without question? Joseph appeared to have had a keen sense of understanding that may only come when one is touched by angels.

Could this be the message of the angels: love without reserve, act without hesitancy and trust explicitly knowing that we are surrounded by the whisperings of angels?

Cynthia Sartor, Companion

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Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Today's Scripture:  
Jer. 18: 18-20; Ps. 31: 5-6, 14-16  
Mt. 20: 17-28

## Put on Your Trust

In our readings today we hear words and attitudes that sound eerily similar to what we hear in much of the daily news – stories about intrigue and plotting to bring someone down, to harm perceived enemies, to secure one's own power and advantage by unjust or questionable means. Sometimes it's hard not to feel overwhelmed, disheartened and even paralyzed by these stories and the self-centered attitudes and systemic evils they represent. What can I/we do to right so many wrongs? I think today's readings suggest a light for our path in these difficult times.

Notice how Jesus handles the request of James, John and their mother. He doesn't argue, but he sets their request in a larger context – life's inevitable suffering, the fact that some things are not ours to control or even worth striving for. Then, firmly but gently, he calls the disciples to transcend their selfish, petty, angry attitudes through loving service to others, service which might even demand the giving of their lives for the good of those others.

Jesus' call sounds so simple, but experience shows us how challenging a life of selfless giving can be. Even Jesus, in fearful anguish, cried out to his Abba: *"They frighten me from every side... Into your hands I commend my spirit... My trust is in you, O Lord."*

So as you serve today, put on your trust. Like Jesus, trust in God's loving presence always with you. That trust may seem a light garment, but take heart – **it is enough!**

Janet Rozzano, RSM

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Thursday, March 21, 2019

Today's Scripture:  
Jer. 17: 5-10; Ps. 1: 1-4, 6  
Lk. 16: 19-31

## Grace Happens

*"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord."*

Every year during Lent, I try to have a personal challenge. This year, the call from the CLT to "Put my Mercy on" seems to be a perfect fit, through my ministry of hospital chaplaincy.

Almost daily, I encounter patients who, through illness or severe injury, have come face to face with their mortality. They share stories of their lives and, often, their stories reveal losses and regrets, due to lifestyle choices or events which create angst for them at this time of their lives.

Unlike the rich man in today's Gospel, these people have a chance to receive God's grace before their time of death. Whether it means the person needs to make amends to family or friends or needs to renew or forge a new relationship with their God, they get the chance to become like Lazarus in that they can now "trust in the Lord and have hope."

Pope Francis states in his latest encyclical *Rejoice and Be Glad*, "God's friendship (grace) infinitely transcends us...we cannot celebrate this free gift of the Lord's grace unless we realize that our earthly life and our natural abilities are (God's) gift." I have received the gift of God's grace and I strive to live out that gift by walking with the very vulnerable with compassionate presence and love.

How does grace happen in your life?

Julie Brown, RSM

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Friday, March 22, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Gn. 37: 3-4, 12-13, 17-28

Ps. 105: 16-21; Mt. 21: 33-43, 45-46

## Merciful Respect

R-E-S-P-E-C-T, the Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin belts out, followed by the lyrics, "find out what that means to me."

A lack of respect seems to be woven through both Scripture stories today with Joseph's brothers plotting to kill him and instead selling him into slavery. And the tenants in Jesus' parable who lack respect for the landowner, and perhaps, the landowner's lack of respect for his tenants who have done all the work but reap none of the benefits. Surely, the landowner thinks, "They will respect my son." But they don't, any more than the chief priests and Pharisees respect Jesus.

When we don't take time to find out what respect means to another, the results often end in jealousy, greed and violence. We witness this today with migrant workers and their employers who do not pay a living wage, or with land developers who choose not to build affordable housing resulting in an increase in homelessness, or with those in leadership roles who demean the female half of the population.

Jesus reminds us that we are the cornerstone. So how can we find out what respect means for those on the margins – the homeless, the undocumented, those in prison, abused women, trafficked children, the mentally ill, the addicted, the forgotten elderly and the sick and dying of our Mercy community? Let us step out as Catherine McAuley did and "Put our Mercy on," grooving (like Aretha) for "a little respect" and finding out "what that means" for those we seek to serve.

Suzi Ettin, Associate

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Saturday, March 23, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Mi. 7: 14-15, 18-20; Ps. 103: 1-4, 9-12

Lk. 15: 1-3, 11-32

## Prodigal and Problematic

It's a story about: a parent's love for child; a child's disappointment teetering on despair in the unfairness of an outcome that seemingly benefits one and not the other; wanting more and taking what one wants; endurance and perseverance in the hope of finding the lost; *how one waits* and *how one remains* when significant relationships are in jeopardy.

I am all of the characters in the story. I am the one returning home having squandered my inheritance. I am the responsible one *who waits on the parent*, the one who does what's expected. I say: "Look, all these years, I have **slaved for you** and **you** did not even.... (fill in the blank)." Buried within me is the possibility of brooding resentment that can lead to despair and a hardness of heart that blinds me to potential abundance.

Where is God amid all this hurt? What happens when much doesn't go my way? What happens to my being when everything is turned upside down?

Transformation calls for abandonment to and surrender to **love** in abundance. This is my hoped for transformation during Lent. If I am to "Put my Mercy on" I must enter into my human condition fully. To be open to the love that is racing toward me when I begin to experience myself as *a relationship of God* who is with me in all ways and in everything – and **everything of God belongs to me**.

What will you surrender to "Put your Mercy on"?

Katherine Hill, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Sunday, March 24, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*

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

### **Take Off Your Sandals, Put Your Mercy On**

The first reading for this Third Sunday of Lent offers direction for us. Moses is watching the flock of his father-in-law Jethro on Mount Horeb – the mountain of God. An angel of the Lord appears to him in a flame of fire. The bush is blazing, yet is not consumed! Moses finds this strange. He approaches, then turns aside, blinded by the light. The mountain of God lives up to its name as the voice of God calls him, *Moses. Moses. Come no closer. I am here.*

Gently, God talks to Moses. *“Take off your sandals. The place where you are standing is holy ground.”* God asks us to do the same. We live with many protective external supports like simply wearing shoes. Internal and personal reasons also cause us to ignore God’s call. Extending ourselves in relationships takes time. Deeper personal issues can be operative: I’m not the right person for the job; I don’t have the skills.

However, if we “Put our Mercy on” and say YES, change can happen. The change can be in ourselves and in those we serve. Mercy helps us see with compassionate eyes and feel with loving hearts. Mercy relieves the suffering of another person. God will speak to us and reveal God’s name. Believe it! Moses heard God’s name – I Am Who Am.

Reaching out in Mercy blesses both the giver and receiver. Future direction for both lives can be revealed. It happened to Moses. It can happen to us.

Judy Niemet, RSM





**Monday, March 25, 2019**

**FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Is. 7: 10-14; 8: 10; Ps. 40: 7-11*

*Heb. 10: 4-10; Lk. 1: 26-38*

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**Called**

The Annunciation, a painting by American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner, shows us a Mary who appears to be stunned. Overwhelmed. Immobilized. Bewildered. We can almost hear her ask, "How can this come about?" She senses that her relationships, reputation and future are all unknown. She looks exhausted. (To see this painting, google Tanner, Annunciation.)

Many of us experience similar feelings today, living during what may be a spiritual crisis for humanity. Scientists warn of a planet in imminent danger, and millions of refugees and desperate immigrant families are separated, their children stiff with fear at the borders. Walls and detention camps loom. Harsh rhetoric and even harsher realities of inequality, racism and violence increase. Even the Church we grew up in seems in peril.

In a time of extreme polarization, what is the extreme of love? Mary didn't remain immobilized. She visited Elizabeth, lived the present moment. She was called.

We are called to "Put our Mercy on" in new ways, to go deeper within as we intuit the shift in spiritual consciousness that beckons us. We rightly celebrate years of Mercy response to need. Yet we grasp that a belief in the interconnectedness of humanity means we too are complicit in the structures of inequality. Together, we must nurture inner joy and compassion to meet hatred and polarization with courage. We must encourage one another to explore new articulations of the transformative power of love and truth.

We may be bewildered, overwhelmed, even exhausted. But like Mary, we are called.

Kathleen Erickson, RSM

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*



**Tuesday, March 26, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Dn. 3: 25, 34-43; Ps. 25: 4-9*

*Mt. 18: 21-35*

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**Forgiveness and Freedom**

Webster defines the word *forgive*: "to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense or mistake." How difficult that is for us humans with minds like iron traps! The memory of hurt imprisons us like a captive; we cannot escape. Some may even say, "I can *never* forgive, no matter what!"

In today's Gospel, Matthew makes evident the need to "Put our Mercy on." The passage weighs our forgiving others by the measure of God's forgiving us. Peter asks how often must he forgive another, "as many as seven times?" Jesus replies, "seventy-seven times!" I believe he meant: *to infinity and beyond!*

Isn't that what God does for us? Like the king in the parable, God's unlimited mercy is compassionate and forgiving when we repent and repair our relationship repeatedly damaged by sin. Thus, God teaches us how to restore broken relationships with others.

True, humans are hardwired to retaliate when disrespected or when pride has been injured. But holding onto hurt and thinking of ways to get back just make us miserable! Lewis Smedes wrote: "To forgive is to set the prisoner free and to discover that the prisoner was you."

So, if I believe the words Jesus taught, "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,*" then I must be merciful enough to live that prayer and work "to build bridges of understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation." (CLT Letter) I must be merciful and free enough to forgive *to infinity and beyond.*

Kay Nowatzki, Associate

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*



Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Dt. 4: 1, 5-9; Ps. 147: 12-13, 15-16, 19-20

Mt. 5: 17-19

## Open Your Heart

This third week of Lent, we are encouraged to pray about the teachings and regulations God has delivered to our listening ears. It is clear we must learn from them and give evidence of our wisdom and understanding as they bring life to this moment. God has planted the seed of faith in our hearts and allowed it to grow and blossom without limits. We give thanks for these special blessings.

Through the Psalms, we learn of God's greatness and power which inspire our worship and praise. The gifts which surround us provide blessings in nature and in all of creation. Again, we are grateful and eager to spread God's glory and goodness.

Let us remember that the Spirit is at work and demands accountability that we achieve the level of holiness God has planned for us. Let us ask for the grace to live lives worthy of this call to express God's tender love to others. Often we have moments in which we focus on petty distractions or mundane worries that draw our attention away from the many blessings in our lives. As we reflect on God's words, let us remember the responsibility that comes hand-in-hand with the gift of God's presence.

*"Guide me, Lord, along the everlasting way.  
O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;  
You know when I sit and when I stand;  
You understand my thoughts from afar.  
My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,  
With all my ways you are familiar."*

Marcian Deisenroth, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



Thursday, March 28, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Jer. 7: 23-28; Ps. 95: 1-2, 6-9

Lk. 11: 14-23

## Are You a Gatherer or a Scatterer?

Divisions and unrest are rampant in our country and world. Immigrants are being deported or denied entrance; our government is divided on many issues; and sexual abuse cases are prominent. Jeremiah faces similar struggles as he tries to get the people to listen to the voice of God: *"This is the nation that does not listen to the voice of God or take corrections. Faithfulness has disappeared."*

As we "Put our Mercy on" each day we are reminded to listen carefully to God speaking to us through those who are most vulnerable and to listen with credibility and compassion. Jesus in today's Gospel passage also deals with misunderstandings and divisions. As he works an act of Mercy by curing a mute person, he is judged that his actions are the work of a demon. Jesus has strong words for those who are questioning him. There may have been a time when you too have been criticized for what you thought was an act of compassion. If so, you are in good company!

The last line of today's Gospel warns, *"Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters."* Either we "Put our Mercy on" each day and do what we can to follow Jesus in his way of love and compassion or we go our own selfish way. Lent is a good time to ask ourselves – am I a gatherer or a scatterer?

Margaret Mary Platte, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Friday, March 29, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Hos. 14: 2-10; Ps. 81: 6-11, 14, 17*  
*Mk. 12: 28-34*

## **We Belong to Each Other**

Today's readings remind us of a simple, yet sometimes difficult, truth: We must show love to others with the same dedication we offer to God. There's not a hierarchy of love in God's eyes, and, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus praises the scribe who interprets this command correctly. So we love our neighbor, all of our neighbors, and in doing so we show love to God.

In a world that continues to crack under the weight of prejudice and violence, when love and kindness seem to be in short supply and fear of those we consider "other" keeps us from forming meaningful bonds, adopting a posture of love can seem like a radical feat. Yet, it is what is asked of us.

We are called to "return to the Lord," the prophet Hosea says, but how can we make a return to each other? The season of Lent provides us the opportunity to wrestle with this question. It may lead us to spaces that are uncomfortable or that challenge us to step outside the boundaries we set for ourselves. Yet, this message, this command, is at the heart of what Mercy has taught me. We may not always get it right, but we are challenged to try because at the very core of what we know to be true, we belong to each other.

Laura Forbes, MVC Alumna

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*



**Saturday, March 30, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Hos. 6: 1-6; Ps. 51: 3-4, 18-21*  
*Lk. 18: 9-14*

## **Which Path?**

In today's Gospel a Pharisee and a tax collector followed a path to the temple. Each arrived with a different attitude and approach to prayer. The Pharisee looked inward while the tax collector was open to his complete dependence on God's graciousness.

A path on a new journey is often dubious. A new path requires numerous attitude adjustments because it can be smooth, rocky, jagged, mucky, icy, hilly, mountainous, quicksand, curved or go off on a tangent. Our path/approach to the Journey of Oneness can be similar to Catherine's. Catherine McAuley's attitude in the midst of her tripping about is akin to the tax collector's. She spoke of being animated and being cordial to one another. To be gracious implies courtesy and kind consideration. To be cordial implies warmth and heartiness.

The path/approach the Pharisee took was diametric to Catherine's and the tax collector's. Looking inward can take us down a negative path of being pretentious, crusty and inhospitable. Getting entangled in such attitudes will inhibit our ability to "Put our Mercy on." Therefore, let us take Catherine's and the tax collector's path and be open to complete dependence on God's graciousness during our Journey of Oneness.

Consider: What quotes from Catherine animate you as we are tripping about on our Journey of Oneness? What word(s) or symbolic design might you place in your room or on a T-shirt or a cap to focus on an attitude adjustment as you "Put your Mercy on"?

Margaret Weigel, RSM

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*



Sunday, March 31, 2019

*Today's Scripture:*

*Jos. 5: 9-12; Ps. 34: 2-7*

*2 Cor. 5: 17-21; Lk. 15: 1-3, 11-32*

## Rejoice!

This cry comes mid-Lent: Rejoice! Why? In terms of today's readings, Paul answers that question this way: *"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And this is from God."*

New things? For the Israelites, food from their own farming in Canaan; manna becomes a thing of the past. For the Corinthians, reconciliation with God; sin becomes a thing of the past. For Jesus' listeners, a God so loving that the only apt image is of a father who warmly and willingly forgives self-centered and insulting sons; retribution and mere duty become things of the past.

Food is at the center of the Joshua passage, and feasting is at the heart of Luke's story. So, rejoice on this Fourth Sunday that is **of** Lent, but not **in** it. Today is a time for feasting, not fasting. It's a day for celebrating, not sacrificing.

And how shall we celebrate? How about this: Let's do Sunday brunch! Let's get together with some others to feast on some favorite foods and to favor one another with insights we've relished from the reflections of the past weeks of our Lenten journey.

Maybe we could spark such a conversation while enjoying the breakfast or brunch that comes our way every Sunday morning. Maybe we could invite a few friends to our home for conversation and croissants – and more. Maybe afternoon tea or Sunday supper better suits our schedules for reflection and refreshment with Mercy colleagues. Maybe "brunch" will take the form of a social

media exchange or a telephone tree, each participant sipping her own tea or savoring her own wine.

Whatever its form, Sunday brunch is on the menu today in the spirit of the rejoicing communities presented to us in the day's Scriptures – the Israelites settling in a new land after decades of wandering, the Corinthians experiencing the new call to be "ambassadors for Christ," the Jews of Jesus' time hearing a new parable about God's extraordinarily generous love.

So, what is new for us this Lent? What has us rejoicing? What new thoughts, convictions, attitudes, insights, determinations, resolutions? What new "takes" on our communal call to serve "the poor, sick and ignorant"? Any new approaches to each or any of our Critical Concerns – Earth, immigration, racism, violence, women? What about possible new appreciation for some or several among Sister Elizabeth Davis' "new foundations" – collaboration, contemplation, cosmology, the globalization of Mercy, inclusion, integral ecology?

In other words, this Lent what new ways are emerging for us/for me by which to "Put our Mercy on"? In those new ways, as well as in familiar time-tested ways, let us and the world we seek to serve **Rejoice!**

Joy Clough, RSM



**Monday, April 1, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
Is. 65: 17-21; Ps. 30: 2, 4-6, 11-13  
Jn. 4: 43-54

## To Trust Is to Love

As a teenager when I asked for the use of the family car, I would always get the same response from my parents. If I asked my mother first, she would say, "Ask your father." If I asked my father first, he would say, "Ask your mother." It was always a conundrum.

Frequently, we find ourselves in perplexing situations just as the servants at Cana were confounded as to what to do when the wine ran out. When Mary saw the situation the servants were in, she had compassion not only for them but also for the bridal couple who would be embarrassed if it were known that there was no more wine.

In this moment, Mary was robed in mercy and simply said to her son, "They have no wine." She did not ask for a miracle. She did not tell her son what to do. She simply trusted that Jesus, too, would have a heart of compassion for the young couple.

And, what did Mary say to the servants? "Do whatever he tells you." When I am confused or in the midst of making a decision, I must bring this same approach to my prayer. I must be willing to honestly listen to what Jesus is telling me, trust his words to me and resolve to do the best I can.

I must fill my water jugs and bring them to him, trusting that I am doing as he would wish. For to trust is to love.

Marla Yeck, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Tuesday, April 2, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
Ez. 47: 1-9, 12; Ps. 46: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9  
Jn. 5: 1-16

## Waters of Mercy

*"I saw water flowing from the Temple....  
Wherever the water flows, every sort of living creature shall live."*

With these words, Ezekiel announces today's theme: life-giving water.

John's Gospel introduces us to a man in great need of God's mercy – a man who's been waiting a very long time near a body of water that has brought life to many. Jesus draws near and, seeing his longing hope and deep faith, offers healing mercy. The man's life is changed, not by the pool but by Jesus, the very source of healing water, the very source of Mercy.

I invite you to bring to mind a body of water that has been life-giving for you – a lake, a stream or river, the ocean. Use all your senses to make this water real for you. Experience the life that has come to you through this water.

Now shift your gaze to Jesus, the living water, source of life-giving mercy and healing. What healing do you need or desire as you respond to the call to "Put your Mercy on"? Ask for God's Mercy to flow over you, to flow through you. Thus drenched yourself, you will be more able to bring this life-giving water of mercy to others.

Then you can exclaim with today's psalmist, *"There is a stream whose runlets gladden the city of God....Behold the astounding things our God has wrought."*

Marguerite Buchanan, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Is. 49: 8-15; Ps. 145: 8-9, 13-14, 17-18

Jn. 5: 17-30

## Bridges

One dialogue group responded to the invitation to "Put your Mercy on" by asserting that the invitation is not to BUILD bridges of mercy but to BE bridges of mercy. In some translations of today's first reading Isaiah seems to echo that same invitation. "Thus says Yahweh...I have appointed you to BE the covenant for my people." How?

Gregory Boyle in his book *Tattoos on the Heart* is in agreement with Scripture scholars who contend that the original translation of the beatitudes is not "Blessed are the single-hearted...Blessed are the peacemakers..." and so on. A more accurate interpretation would say, "You're in the right place if...you are single-hearted or work for peace" or are merciful.

"I have appointed you to BE the covenant for my people." How?

To be a light for those in darkness.

To be food to the hungry.

To be drink to the thirsty.

To be the way for those who search.

To be consolation to those mourning.

To be mercy to those seeking wholeness.

To be tenderness to those who need a gentle touch.

To be a support to those who stumble.

To be a bridge of mercy.

Isaiah goes on to say, "I (Yahweh) shall turn all my mountains into a road and my highways will be raised aloft." Where in your life is God inviting you to BE a road...or a highway...or a bridge of mercy?

Mary Ann Krempges, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



Thursday, April 4, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Ex. 32: 7-14; Ps. 106: 19-23

Jn. 5: 31-47

## Desert Trust

In case our mid-Lenten journey has become a kind of wandering in the desert, today's first reading may jolt us out of any complacency.

How timely for a Moses moment as we listen to him conversing with God about the chosen people who have become discouraged with the pace of God's plans. In the desert the people have built a golden calf to worship. In my own case the enthusiasm of Ash Wednesday's resolves has waned and my own sort of discouragement has set in.

The ensuing conversation between God and Moses gives me pause.

On the one hand, there is God telling Moses, "Let me alone then, that my wrath may blaze up" against the chosen people who have become depraved.

On the other hand, there is Moses not "letting God alone" but "imploring" God to relent.

God seems to be a threatening God and Moses a steadfast advocate for the people.

I find myself asking: Do I easily get discouraged when God's plan is different than I wish it were? Am I tempted to find a way to compensate? Do I sometimes regret my self-concern or selfishness?

When that happens, do I pray for healing with confidence in God's promise? Do I feel worthy to be as persistent as Moses? Am I as steadfast in my entreaties?

Just as God relents with the people in the desert, I know I can trust in God's promise of fidelity and enduring love and mercy.

Mary Brian Costello, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Friday, April 5, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Wis. 2: 1, 12-22; Ps. 34: 17-21, 23*  
*Jn. 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30*

## Who Is the Good Person?

As we “Put our Mercy on” this Lent, a frequent question concerns what it means to be a good person. Jesus, the just one, moves closer to the ultimate consequences of his choices for integrity of word and deed. His interior freedom is evidenced from his 12-years-old wisdom conversations with the temple leaders, through his refusal to test God in the desert temptation, to the situation in today’s Gospel. Here Jesus moves about carefully, almost in secret. Aware of the impending confrontation with the authorities, he still speaks God’s word with integrity.

The Wisdom reading demonstrates the state of mind of the “wicked”: They find the good person obnoxious. They feel reproached, censured, judged; he is different from them and they can’t bear to look at him. But I wonder: Are there people who find these wicked ones “good”? Are they excellent providers for their families? Do they attend temple services and contribute to the support of the temple authorities? Wisdom 2 says that their thinking is erroneous. While most likely they believe they are good people, their wicked intentions have blinded them to trust and love.

We who “Put our Mercy on” can be an affront to those who are hardened by fears and prejudices. We must work to build non-judgmental bridges of shared understanding, reconciliation, and inclusion. As we “Put our Mercy on,” we remember that “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good [people] to do nothing.”

Michelle Gorman, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Saturday, April 6, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Jer. 11: 18-20; Ps. 7: 2-3, 9-12*  
*Jn. 7: 40-53*

## Seeking/Being Refuge

Do you ever feel like you are under siege? Do you feel like an attack could come from any corner and you might not know how to respond? What do you do?

I look at our country today, and immigrants, especially immigrant families, are under siege. People of color are regularly maligned and even attacked. The harassment of women is a watermark of our culture. Storms of water and fire increase in intensity and displace thousands upon thousands.

In all of today’s Scripture readings there is a common theme of individuals being threatened – by those who hatch plots, by the wicked, by authorities. Feeling unsafe, being unsafe, this is not unique to our time.

Am I able to put my trust in God to seek refuge, as the psalmist does? It is too often that my refuge lies in ignorance or indifference and not in the challenging presence of my God.

But when I do turn there for wisdom and guidance, sometimes my eyes are opened enough to see how I can clothe myself in Mercy so that I can be the hands and feet of God for those who are in danger. I can see my way to be a witness, an advocate, to be shelter in the storms of life’s violence. When I am able to wear it, God’s Mercy becomes a tangible reality to a person in need.

Mike Poulin, Staff Member

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



Sunday, April 7, 2019

Today's Scripture:  
Is. 43: 16-21; Ps. 126: 1-6  
Phil. 3: 8-14; Jn. 8: 1-11

## Openness

As we listen to today's responsorial Psalm, we are reminded that, indeed, *"The Lord has done great things for us."* Was Frances Warde filled with joy, and perhaps some relief, as she entered Pittsburgh for the first time? Did she reflect on Isaiah as she established each new Foundation? Was she in awe in her realization that the Lord was doing something new? Did she perceive how Catherine's vision for service would spring forth into new Foundations across the country?

When the Amalgamation took place in 1929, many were filled with joy but some, like the Philippians, were "straining forward," not sure what lay ahead. Even then, however, God was not finished with us. After much reflection and many meetings, the Institute came into being in 1991. Were you in Buffalo for the Founding Event? Was your heart filled with joy, knowing that the Lord was doing great things for us?

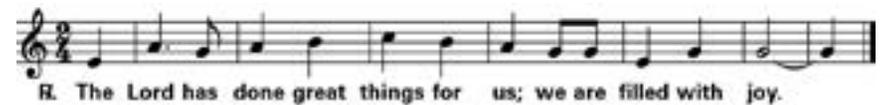
Yet again, God asked us to strain forward to what lies ahead, not to rest too long in our comfort zone. And so, once more we reconfigured, this time into six Communities (2008). Whether we were part of South Central, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, NyPPaW, CCASA or West Midwest, we knew that we had accomplished something new. Were we filled with joy as we met sisters we had only known as names? Did we look forward to participating in our Consultation Networks and to opportunities for quality time with our Community leaders? Did we forge new friendships? Did we have a great sense of belonging to something our minds had grasped but with which, perhaps, our hearts were only slowly catching up?

Yet, even as the Communities were being formed, some questioned why – why not go further and become one as an Institute without the local leadership we were in the process of electing? And so, over time

The "why" merged into action.  
Oneness became our theme.  
Slowly, oneness filled our hearts  
And has become our cherished dream.

As we look back, we know that God **has** done great things for us, filling us with joy each step of the way. Are we willing now to echo Philippians, not holding on to what went before but "straining forward to what lies ahead"?

Mary Michon Rozmajzl, RSM



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Hear the whole song performed by Sisters Mary Michon Rozmajzl and Mary Schroer by [clicking here](#).



**Monday, April 8, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Dn. 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62*

*OR Dn. 13: 41-62*

*Ps. 23: 1-6; Jn. 8: 12-20*

## **Mercy: "The Face of Jesus"**

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through faith and trust, I "fix my eyes on Jesus" to possess my strength and integrity. I believe in the mercy, tenderness, steadfast love, gentle voice – "Come" – and gentle touch of Jesus whose outstretched arms invite and embrace me, hold me close to him, call me to repentance and bring me from sin to salvation, from death to new life.

My interior experiences of Jesus as "the face of God" lead me to be "the face of Jesus" to another as we discover "the face of Jesus" in each other and come to innocence and honesty before God.

We choose a sacred silence when we possess our souls in the presence of Jesus. He becomes our Light, our Witness, our Justification. We praise God who saves those who hope in him.

*"Though I walk in the dark valley,  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
with your rod and your staff  
that give me courage."*

What am I saying to others by my actions? In what ways is Christ's command that we "pardon one another" a stumbling block for me?

Mary Patricia Conlan, RSM



**Tuesday, April 9, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Nm. 21: 4-9; Ps. 102: 2-3, 16-21*

*Jn. 8: 21-30*

## **Searching for Jesus**

*"I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come."*

When Jesus spoke of "going away," he was referring to his return to God. Until the day when we, too, return to God, we are invited to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who was a model of complete obedience. The season of Lent gives us space to reflect on the ways we may have shut ourselves off from God and ways we can open ourselves to transformation. My own transformation through God's mercy and pardon allows me to be mercy to others.

When reflecting on this Gospel passage, I immediately began searching within myself for the parts of me that are like Jesus. One response was the desire to be a reflection of God's love in the world. One of the most practical ways this can be done is through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy which, as Catherine said, constitute the business of our lives.

We must "Put our Mercy on" and be guided by the spirit of Jesus that dwells within. This spirit, the part of us that is like Jesus, calls us to find him in the midst of God's most vulnerable people – the poor, the homeless, the immigrant. It invites us to an ongoing renewal of our "yes" to act as Catherine did and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Marissa Butler, RSM Novice



Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Dn. 3: 14-20, 91-92, 95; Dn. 3: 52-56

Jn. 8: 31-42

## Fire and Light

The readings for this day cause me to reflect upon my own fears about how my faith would be put to the fire in light of the world's pressures and demands.

I wonder how faithful I would be to my vocation if I were faced with dilemmas or choices as Daniel and his companions were. I ask this even if I were to have my sisters standing by my side. Would I weaken before the pressures of the status quo? Would I give in to strong peers? Would I take the popular or safe way out? Would I remain stubborn, wanting to get my own way, unwilling to compromise no matter what the cost? Or would I remain a faithful daughter of Catherine McAuley and a follower of Jesus Christ, knowing what the Father expects of me and doing what Jesus asks of me?

Trusting and faithful to my heart's vocation, I am drawn to the path I am to follow in order to fulfill the Father's plan for me – even if the path is an unpopular one or one that sides with the marginalized. It is then that I know I would be joined in the fire by a glow that is visible to others even from a distance and that would be encouraging to them. Those who see this light of fidelity would willingly join me in the light to keep God's word burning brightly and not allow the heart's fire to be quenched or cast aside by worldly distractions.

Rita Esparza, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



Thursday, April 11, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Gn. 17: 3-9; Ps. 105: 4-9

Jn. 8: 51-59

## The Gift

Have you ever received an unexpected, awesome gift from someone and responded, "Oh, you shouldn't have"? I have, and I have questioned that response. Was it that I didn't deserve the gift, or couldn't repay it in kind, or mistrusted why I received it, or feared what receiving it might cost me?

Today's readings challenge us to embrace the beautiful gift of God's covenant love. Childless, old Abram becomes transformed into Abraham by God's **everlasting pact** with him and his descendants. As children of Abraham, we are gifted with this same transformational covenant. As daughters of Catherine McAuley, who modeled throughout her life what responsive, mercy-filled covenant loving and living look like, we are gifted with a transformational path. We cannot say to God and Catherine, "You shouldn't have"; these are gifts that cannot be returned to sender because we feel unworthy or fearful.

As we are children of Abraham, our God has promised to be **our loving, faithful God** generation after generation. In return, God asks that we be responsive to his faithfulness by examining our faithfulness to him and leading a life modeled by the one he sent, Jesus, I AM.

As daughters of Catherine McAuley, we are asked to reflect on our shared path. How faithful have we been to "Putting our Mercy on" and examining our mercy-filled covenant loving and living? How open have we been to receiving these gifts and allowing them to transform not only our lives, but also the lives of many?

Rose Wiorek, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Friday, April 12, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Jer. 20: 10-13; Ps. 18: 2-7*  
*Jn. 10: 31-42*

## Backward Justice

As I write, thousands of refugees are slowly walking toward our southern border. With no attempt at understanding or dialogue, they are branded “invaders” and “criminals.” Before hearing their legitimate claims for asylum, a force twice their size is being amassed to keep them from safety and hope.

In today's reading from John, we see the same backward justice. Stones are gathered before charges are made. The sentence is decided without an arrest. It is only when Jesus speaks in a logical manner, placing events in their proper order, that he is met with a rational charge that he aptly refutes, deftly using Scripture to make his argument. The stones are forgotten, the accusers decide to arrest him, but he eludes them and travels to safer territory where his message is heard and hearts are converted.

John O'Donohue shared a Celtic tale about a tribal conflict where, at the moment of violent engagement, one side simply turned sideways into the sun and disappeared. The image of the border fence comes to mind. Only magical realism would allow the exhausted refugees to simply turn sideways and slip through the metal girders unseen. Their only safety exists in their numbers and the truth of their desperate situation. May our Lenten prayers and sacrifices serve to alleviate their suffering and our voices reach those with the power to change what they are fleeing.

Michelle Lankford Salazar, Associate

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Saturday, April 13, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Ez. 37: 21-28; Jer. 31: 10, 11-13*  
*Jn. 11: 45-56*

## Hope in the Wilderness

*“Put your Mercy on” –*

*Lift out of darkness those who have despaired and live in a state of fear.*  
*May the compassion and promise of our loving Savior radiate in us*  
*the expectancy and promise of hope and new life.*

In today's Gospel, we experience the spiritual and inner conflict of those who feared that Jesus was becoming too popular among the Jewish community and that the miracles that he performed would only lead to the Romans taking away their land, holy place and nation.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was too much for the Jewish religious authorities, and therefore something had to be done about Jesus. *“Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, said, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.’”*

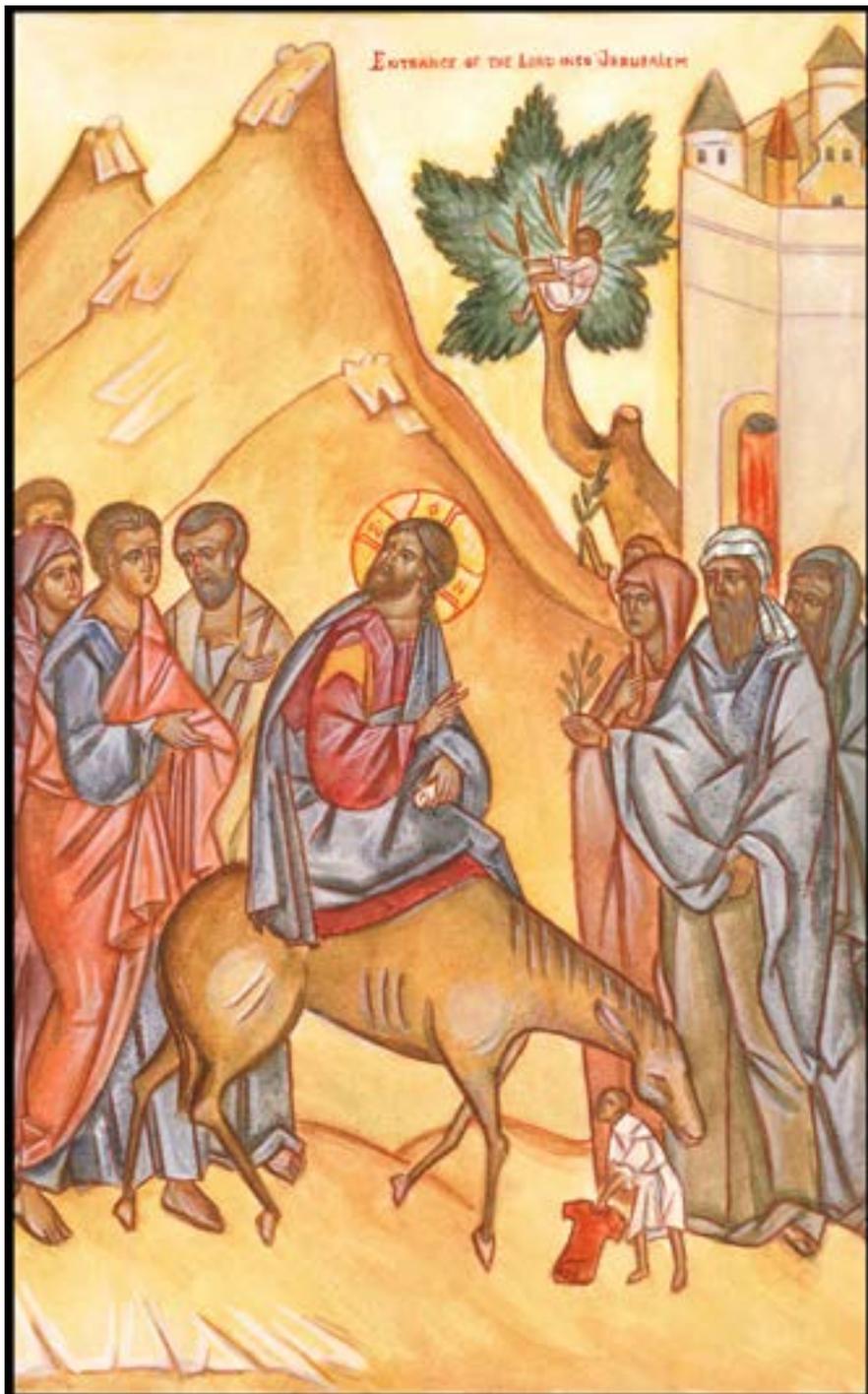
Jesus was aware that from here on the religious authorities and some Jews in his community were plotting to put him to death. Knowing this, Jesus no longer was able to walk freely among the Jews and fled to the wilderness.

Jesus was coming close to his final hours here on this earth, and it was vital that he experience hope and the promise of new life.

Consider: How do I radiate hope and the promise of new life in my daily activities? Do I live the Gospel promise of perfect love to drive out all fear?

Rosemarie Carvalho, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Sunday, April 14, 2019**  
**PALM SUNDAY**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Is. 50: 4-7; Ps. 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24*

*Phil. 2: 6-11; Lk. 22: 14-23: 56*

## Entry into Jerusalem

One of the great secrets of prayer is making time for it. The way to pray with icons is also about making time to observe and interact with them.

In the icon of "The Entry into Jerusalem," we reflect upon that moment between Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and his suffering and death that follow. We are called upon to bring our interior sight to the icon, as well as our familiarity with Scripture.

The bright colors show the joy of the crowd and the joy in our own hearts – our personal "Hosanna." We can read the symbols: Jerusalem is shown white and enclosed; the palm tree, which seems to bend toward Jesus, reminds us of the wood of the cross; and the donkey, a beast of burden, strains under the load of suffering and death that will follow. Some scholars of the icon say the donkey dances with joy as Jesus is recognized as "king." The child throws down a red garment symbolizing a "red carpet" upon which kings walk.

We can "read" the icon ourselves as we slowly recognize images and symbols which are ingrained in our human experience. We literally read Scripture in line and color. The questions are, "What else do you see?" and, in time, "How will your seeing be different because of your spiritual journey?"

Notice the gestures, colors and relationships in the icon. The secret of praying with icons is simple – just stop and see!

Anne Sekul, RSM

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*



**Monday, April 15, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Is. 42: 1-7; Ps. 27: 1-3, 13-14*  
*Jn. 12: 1-11*

## Martha and Mary “Put Their Mercy On”

In today's Gospel, Jesus joins Lazarus at table for a meal – Lazarus for whom Jesus put his Mercy on by bringing him back to the living in the previous chapter of John. Martha put her best Mercy on by serving the two, gifting them with sustenance, perhaps allowing them to feed one another's souls. One could say that Martha's form of putting on Mercy was safe, well-received, and without criticism from others.

Mary, on the other hand, chose to put her Mercy on in a more controversial manner that brought critique from others. Mary took a liter of rich oil, anointed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair – not unlike the Mercy Jesus would put on for his disciples later at the Last Supper. Mary's action of Mercy was immediately called out by Judas as wasteful.

Many times, putting on Mercy is uncomplicated or safe - healing the sick, feeding the hungry, educating the ignorant. Other times it is more complicated, less safe, frequently criticized - raising the dead; anointing someone's feet with expensive oil; protesting fracking, military spending, the abuse of water rights; supporting LGBTIQ\* persons within the Mercy family.

Consider: When is it uncomplicated or safe for me to “Put my Mercy on”? When is it complicated and less safe to do so? What am I willing to risk to “Put my Mercy on”? How will I do so?

Sarah Ruth Foster, RSM

\*LGBTIQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Tuesday, April 16, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*  
*Is. 49: 1-6; Ps. 71: 1-6*  
*Jn. 13: 21-33, 36-38*

## My Neighbors' Mercy

Jesus tells Peter, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now.” Why would anyone want to follow Jesus into betrayal, torture, abandonment, cruel death? But Peter did not know that, in spite of Jesus' frequent foretelling.

As young sisters we too said, “I will follow.” Then came ministry, community life, change, perhaps sickness, discouragement, loss and misunderstanding, together with a deepening understanding of the call to follow.

The call now is to “Put our Mercy on.” Is my circle of Mercy in retirement and age too circumscribed to do this? Though there are no longer classrooms of students for me, there is my neighbor Joe, who struggles with mental illness. There is Ellen down the hall, a lonely woman locked in walls of suspicion. There are the grandmothers and uncles helping to feed and care for their families.

From my neighbors in this low-income senior complex, I am learning a different way to be Mercy. Their lives are not as ordered or comfortable as mine. But we listen and learn from each other. Each day they are there to encourage me to follow the call, my call and theirs to put Mercy on, to be Mercy and to receive Mercy, one to another and one from another. Jesus promises Peter, and us, “*You shall follow afterward.*” Each of us follows in a different way – learning daily lessons in “Putting our Mercy on.”

Susan Severin, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Wednesday, April 17, 2019**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Is. 50: 4-9; Ps. 69: 8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34  
Mt. 26: 14-25*

## **Trust in the Lord**

*"The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears; I will not be rebellious; I have not turned away."*

This verse struck me, as I have been struggling with the woes of the world. I try very hard not to turn away. Not to turn away from my family who needs my time, from work, from my friends, from all of my other day-to-day responsibilities. Responsibilities to my church, to my community, to my country. It is hard to know to whom we should give our time and attention at any given moment. And it feels as though we are being pulled in a million different directions. I know I am not alone in this struggle.

As I write this, I have homework due for my master's class; I have responsibilities at church that need to be attended to; I have phone calls to make for my family – all this on top of my normal daily responsibilities. I am overwhelmed.

So, this morning I turned it over to God. I asked him to help me prioritize and get things done. I have to say I am feeling more at peace this afternoon. I am not sure if I will get everything done today that I want to, but that rarely happens.

Still, I'm holding an insight: When feeling stressed, overwhelmed and pulled in a million different directions, remember to give it all to God. He will make our paths straight.

Tammy Hansen, Associate

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*

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**Thursday, April 18, 2019**

**HOLY THURSDAY**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Ex. 12: 1-8, 11-14; Ps. 116: 12-13, 15-18  
1 Cor. 11: 23-26; Jn. 13: 1-15*

## **Do As I Have Done**

*"You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so....If I, therefore, ... have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model...as I have done for you, you should also do."*

These are just a few of Jesus' words from the last meal he had with his disciples. They are words that speak volumes, especially in our "me first" world. Here's Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, performing a service for his followers that only a servant would do. And he does it completely, not in a perfunctory way. He does it as a visible sign, one they would not forget, and he reminds them, lest they missed the point, that this is what they are to do for one another.

As Christians and as Sisters of Mercy, this is our injunction, too. Go, wash another's feet. Go, listen to others when they need a caring ear, a caring heart. Go, be a support for those you meet along your journey, no matter who they are. Go, "be courageous like a woman," and as Jesus did, meet the needs of those who come before you, who walk with you, who may appear just once in your life.

This day is for more than remembering what Jesus did. It is a day for looking at our own lives in light of what Jesus did. How am I living each day these words of Jesus, "*As I have done for you, you should also do*"?

Bernadette Hart, RSM

*~ Put Your Mercy On ~*

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**Friday, April 19, 2019**

**GOOD FRIDAY**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Is. 52: 13-53: 12*

*Ps. 31: 2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25*

*Heb. 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9; Jn. 18: 1-19: 42*

## Love's Gift, Love's Challenge

It was a time of deepest darkness; yet we call it "good" – Good Friday. From the cross, Jesus' arms open wide to embrace all of us. Those arms outstretched encircle the poor, the oppressed, those on the edge. We, too, are in those arms with our fears, our doubts, our being just who we are. And, his heart pierced so ruthlessly, opens wide to claim anyone, everyone with extravagant love.

As we sing so many times, "We remember how you loved us to your death and still..." we are drawn into your legacy of love, that merciful love, your seamless garment.

In the Gospel of John, that phrase, "seamless garment," never captured my attention until the CLT's recent invitation to "Put your Mercy on." That slogan set me thinking of how identifying clothes can be. His "seamless garment" beautifully symbolizes the inclusive mercy of Jesus; yet it did not protect him from death. So too, "Put your Mercy on" is not meant to be a shield for us but rather a challenge.

If music inspires you, why not pray in song my adapted version of Rory Cooney's "Jerusalem, My Destiny"?

We have set our hearts on your way.

Your mercy is our destiny.

Though we cannot see the end for us,

Let us not turn away.

We have set our hearts for the way.

Yes, Mercy is our destiny.

No one will walk alone

For Mercy makes us one.

Regine Fanning, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Saturday, April 20, 2019**

**HOLY SATURDAY**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Ex. 14: 15-15: 1; Ex. 15: 1-6, 17-18*

*Rom. 6: 3-11; Ps. 118: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23*

*Lk. 24: 1-12*

## Go Forward

As the heaviness of Good Friday lifts, we hear the story of the Israelites' journey out of Egypt. From the depths of their fears and anger, they cried out to Moses who did as God instructed. He raised his staff, stretched out his arm and said, "Go forward." Yes, "go forward," regardless of fears, regardless of a preference for staying with the known misery.

On Holy Saturday the Apostles were overwhelmed with grief. Recalling the happenings of the previous days made them frightful of what would be next. They were confused and disoriented. How were they to "go forward" without Jesus their beloved leader, their challenging teacher, their role model for change and their friend? Now they hear stories about the women saying he was not in the tomb. What is happening?

Inside the tomb, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Jesus' mother, met messengers who said they were looking in the wrong place. They were terrified. They remembered Jesus saying he would die and rise. In amazement and confusion they "go forward." They share their experience with some doubting Apostles.

Our Mercy community is aspiring to "go forward." We have cried out our fears and voiced our desires as we struggled with the unknown. Now we need to embrace the Spirit who led the Israelites, empowered the Apostles, and stirred the women. We "go forward" on our Journey of Oneness, one small step at a time into the oneness of all creation.

Karen Dunville, RSM

~ Put Your Mercy On ~



**Sunday, April 21, 2019**  
**EASTER**

*Today's Scripture:*

*Acts 10: 34, 37-43; Ps. 118: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23*

*Col. 3: 1-4 OR 1 Cor. 5: 6-8*

*Jn. 20: 1-9 OR Lk. 24: 1-12*

## **Resurrection Awakening**

It started as if he were waking from a nap – a long slow climb toward consciousness, a delicious sense of rising through waves of sleep. And then, like a flash of lightning: He was alive! Alive and not in pain. Alive and peaceful, filled with wonder. He was himself – Jesus, gloriously alive. He was the Word...with the Father... in the Spirit!

Even as he savored and rejoiced in this awareness, he was no longer alone. Simultaneously, it seemed, he was with his mother Mary...he was in the company of Moses and Elijah...he was singing with David and laughing with his cousin John and hugging Joseph. Yet, he was in a garden and it was Mary of Magdala who was speaking to him and to whom he spoke with yearning and gratitude, with aching joy at the miracle of life and of loving relationships.

And then it was Peter – the Rock, but not always. And Thomas – the skeptic become believer. And Andrew and John and James and all his friends. The women who'd supported him and stood by his cross and came to the tomb. Some disheartened disciples on a road. A few dazed fishermen back in their boats.

Beyond these stretched streams of folks being called Christ-ians. He saw peaks of holiness and shining souls, valleys of evil and shriveled spirits. Love and hate, kindness and cruelty, faith and betrayal, hope and despair. The alternating rhythms of the awesome, awful human condition – as he himself had experienced it – winding through centuries and millennia toward eternity.

Eternity, where he was now poised and where there throbbed a chant, a drumbeat proclamation, a pulsing truth that would not be denied. As the words reached him, Jesus flung wide his arms, embracing earth and eternity, praising Abba, delighting in the Spirit and listening with profound gratitude and joy:

“Christ Jesus, yesterday and today,  
the beginning and the end,  
the Alpha and the Omega.  
All time belongs to him,  
and all the ages.  
To him be glory and power  
through every age and forever.  
Amen.”

Joy Clough, RSM



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## It Takes a Community

We are women and men knit by God into a community of faith and prayer, mutual respect and support, service and mercy. This booklet is evidence of that; it took a community to prepare this gift for the West Midwest Community.

Thanks go to our CLT – Sisters Sue Sanders, Margaret Mary Hinz, Maria Klosowski, Peg Maloney and especially Ana María Pineda, the liaison for this project – for authorizing, encouraging and financing this endeavor.

Thanks go to the unseen “inviters,” those who enticed others to write the reflections that constitute this booklet. These co-conspirators? Sisters Cristina Caballero, Maria Campos, Diane Clyne, Mary Kay Dobrovolny, LuAnn Hannasch, Charmaine Jayawardene, Margaret Johnson, Renée Kettering, Terry Maltby, Elaine Pacheco, Shari Sutherland and Kathy Thornton.

Thanks be to the authors, artists and musicians whose spirituality and creativity have enriched us this Lent. Their 40+ names appear with their contributions.

Thanks go to those in our Omaha office who produced this booklet and got it into our hands. Special mention is due to Sandy Goetzinger and Maureen Falcon for the design, layout and printing, as well as to Sister Carol Stoecklin and Pat Olsen for packaging and mailing the finished product.

Personally, the editor thanks God for all those whose inspiration and cooperation created this community prayer resource. *Deo gratias!*

Joy Clough, RSM  
Editor



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**Personal Journaling**



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**Personal Journaling**



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**Personal Journaling**



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**Personal Journaling**

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Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community  
wmwcommunications@mercywmw.org  
402-393-8225*