

*Living***Faith**

# LENT



DAILY CATHOLIC DEVOTIONS

## Here and Now

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*[But] take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.* MATTHEW 6:1

It feels great to be seen acting our best. The performance spaces provided in social media, for instance, can reward us with instant “likes” and comments for our good deeds and smart words. Reading today’s gospel, at first I feel ashamed that I have gone in search of these easy affirmations at times.

But I don’t believe shame is God’s purpose in this reading. We are taught as children that if we live right, we will go to heaven, so it’s easy to presume that we may be condemned for performing righteous deeds with the wrong intention. But maybe we’re thinking about it wrong.

Maybe God wants to bring a little bit of heaven to earth by showering us with his presence and grace when we pray in private. Perhaps the recompense he wants to give us is his grace, mercy and relationship in the here and now.

ELIZABETH DUFFY

## Choose Wisely

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*I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life...* DEUTERONOMY 30:19

If I were asked to choose one verse in the Old Testament to serve as a touchstone through good times and bad, it would be these words that God gives to Moses to share with his people.

Why? For starters, they couldn't be any clearer. God gives me a choice: "Do I want my life to be a blessing, or do I want to wither on the vine?"

I don't think God was implying choices such as what toothpaste to buy or what to order on a menu. No, we make hundreds of inconsequential choices every week. It's the biggies: Am I going to help someone in need or go my merry way? Am I going to treat people different from myself with the same respect I appreciate? Am I going to speak up when someone is being mistreated or will I look the other way?

Saying "yes" to the path of life that God places before us leads to a life well lived.

JUDY SCHUENEMAN

## Sacrifice

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*My sacrifice, O God, is an contrite spirit;  
a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.*

PSALM 51:19

With the beginning of Lent comes a season of sacrifice and service and much consideration and discussion about what we are “giving up.” It can be simple or good to give up things like wine, chocolate, fast food and other things that can lead to an unhealthy balance. And perhaps we can replace an idol or a craving with an intentional refocusing on God. This can be helpful.

In addition to using Lent as a season that leads to self-improvement, this verse goes deeper. It offers us a path toward spiritual transformation. When we take time in meditation, prayer and introspection with a true desire to really see ourselves, we all find we have areas that need to be brought into the light. It takes a spirit of humility and willingness to allow ourselves to be transformed on this level ... because we first have to admit we need healing. A broken ego is a difficult, life-changing sacrifice.

Let's challenge ourselves to really go there this Lent.

KRISTIN ARMSTRONG

## Fearless Introductions

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*And leaving everything behind, [Levi] got up and followed him.* LUKE 5:28

Levi, later called Matthew, likely had a pretty cushy life. In particular, he was used to the fishermen despising him, since it was likely that he collected taxes from them for the Romans. And yet, when Jesus called, he answered. What's more, he threw a dinner to introduce Jesus to his colleagues.

As Catholics, we appreciate the opportunity that almsgiving, fasting and other sacrifices offer to draw us closer to Jesus. But let's go a step further this year. Let's get out of our comfort zone and introduce Jesus to some nonbelieving or lukewarm friends and acquaintances by sharing the banquet of peace he brings to us. When we follow, what we bring to him along the way is more treasured than what we leave behind.

*Jesus, give me the confidence to talk about you to others.*

MELANIE RIGNEY

## Suffering Misunderstood

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*Christ suffered for sins once...that he might lead you to God.*

1 PETER 3:18

People often talk about suffering as something to endure. They may even add that it can be meritorious. This is true, but I think it misses the depths.

When a child is sick, loving parents will sacrifice their own night's rest, even exposing themselves to the illness, to nurse the child. They will likely say they want to be with the child, not as a burden, but out of love. Similarly, Jesus, despite a natural human aversion to suffering, willingly embraced the cross. He did so out of love for us, his spiritually sick children.

There are many crosses in every life. If we embrace them out of love of God and neighbor, we will be united to the infinite love of Jesus' cross. Then, the "burden will be light," and it will be a source of grace for others and for ourselves.

MSGR. STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

## Answer This Question

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*[Jesus] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

MATTHEW 16:15

I was once on retreat with several friends when our discussion turned to our favorite pastimes. I still remember the shock on their faces when I divulged my love of baseball and roller coasters. I quickly realized that information did not quite match the image they had of me.

Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he was; we, too, must answer that question. People saw Jesus as a prophet, perhaps even John the Baptist, but certainly nothing more. Although we call him the Messiah and the Son of God, we unknowingly fall into this same trap when we constrict Jesus to fit our image of him. This is especially true in our times when we are tempted to reduce the Christ to align with our own agendas.

Peter had room in his heart and mind for the Spirit of God to reveal the essence of Jesus to him. This Lent, may we pray for that same grace.

TERRI MIFEK

# Hallelujah! He Is Risen!

*Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.* MARK 16:6

All of Jesus' teachings, all that the prophets had foretold, become reality today. The promise of the ages of a messiah who would redeem and deliver us is fulfilled. The stone that blocked the tomb entrance, that blocked us from God, has been rolled back. Jesus has triumphed—he lives! And because he does, so can we.

There is no longer any reason for us to fear earthly life—or death. When we walk with him, we walk confidently, our hearts and souls focused on him and the promise of eternal life he won for us.

Hallelujah! He is risen indeed!

*Jesus, I give thanks for your great sacrifice and love, knowing I did nothing to deserve it.*

MELANIE RIGNEY

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ACTS 10:34, 37-43 • PSALM 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23  
COL 3:1-4 OR 1 COR 5:6-8 • JOHN 20:1-9 OR MARK 16:1-7

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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