

2025 Lenten Meditations from All Saints' Parishioners



Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21| Gospel for Wednesday, March 5

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

March 5: A Meditation for Ash Wednesday

By Ethel Ware Carter



"I've found out a great thing about ashes, they don't stain." These words came over the telephone from my messiest child in the days when he stoked a wood-burning stove to keep his North Carolina farmhouse warm. The last frigid weeks had produced a mountain of ashes, powdery underfoot, ground into the knees of his trousers, smeared along the woodwork, and refusing to stay put outside on the garden until frozen in place by a layer of icy snow. They did not leave stains but they would not be stilled. Our Ash Wednesday ashes don't stain either. They don't last long, just a symbol for a day at the beginning of a season of reflection, of repentance, of intentionally assuming a posture of openness to God. I love that it is in the middle of the week, Wednesday can be holy, I forget that.

The assigned reading for Ash Wednesday this year is Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. Jesus cautions us not look somber as the hypocrites do when they fast. They mark their faces so others will see. And here we are marking our faces. . . this calls for some self-examination, and we know that is the point.

We are crossed on our foreheads with a symbol that is one of both life and death and reminded that we are dust. I know *memento mori* says many things. Whatever it means to you, dust we are, indeed. We read much today about the kind of dust we are . . . star dust. I think knowing

this renders my ashes a *memento vivere*. Our cross of ashes might just remind me that we are star dust, so live like stardust, sparkle. I wish I knew the name of the woman who when cautioned by Harry not to wear herself out, said "I just want to be sure I am used up." Where there are ashes there has been flame. Flame cannot be captured and held, it dies. It burns itself up giving heat and light and life.

Lenten Meditations from All Saints' Parishioners

Reflecting on the Upcoming Sunday's Gospel

Jesus is Tempted in the Wilderness **Luke 4:1-13 | Gospel for Sunday, March 9**

After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

March 6: A Meditation on Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness

By Laura Trott



I love two windows at All Saints' in particular, both for their horizons. In the first, Christ calls two

fishermen to a life of discipleship. Beyond them are purple hills set amidst a blazing orange sunset, and the waves of the sea shimmer in response. I would like to step into this scene, put my feet beside the blue Sea of Galilee and watch Simon Peter with his hand against his chest say, "me?"

The second window is equally spectacular, and yet I have no wish to intrude upon this scene. Jesus sits alone on a mountaintop. The evening sky is streaked with color, but in the foreground, a serpent slithers away. The man on the mountain does not look particularly divine. His head hangs downward—perhaps in prayer, certainly in hunger and exhaustion—and I wonder how 40 days in the wilderness have changed him and how they might change me.

Lent invites us to step into the wilderness, and while I hope my own path will not resemble the dramatics of Luke's gospel reading, these passages serve as a reminder that a life of faith is a contact sport, one where I am asked to engage totally—body, head, and heart—with God and his creation, whatever the state of my own life and whatever the state of the world. I, who have never been a Lent enthusiast, feel surprisingly keen about this season and its opportunities for reflection, renewal, and challenge. Therefore, I am resolving to put on my walking shoes and return to the window of Christ in the wilderness, which contains things that neither my mind nor stained glass can wholly capture. Jesus is not alone in the wilderness. He has trusted in the grace of God to carry him to the other side of these forty days. He is also, Luke tells us, filled with and led by the Holy Spirit, which provided, and still provides, its own particular sustenance.

March 7: A Meditation on Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness

By Rob Thompson



Often, as I have grown older, I am made aware of the fact that life requires sacrifices of us. Perhaps we can no longer eat the foods we love because of our changing metabolisms. Maybe our free time shrinks as we need to use more of it to perform tasks like purchasing insurance, registering our children for school or updating household budgeting.

It is a comfort to me to know that the spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for a trial. To know that even the son of God was called to place where he needed to keep a long term goal in mind while doing the hard things that insure he realized that goal. It is a gift to be mindful of the future in the face of tasks and events that seem less fun in the present.

March 8: A Meditation on Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness

By Dick Nagy



Jesus was in the wilderness, famished from the 40 days as he was being tempted with grave challenges at a time of great weakness. Many of us have been in a wilderness of our own, perhaps of our own making, facing temptation. Weakness comes at these moments. What do we do, yield or become resolute? To yield to temptation is human. Jesus faced that weakness but his faith in the Spirit and in God guided his choices.

I have been faced with temptations, one that would have changed my life. But my integrity and honor, bolstered by my growing spirituality and faith and knowing of God's presence in my life, gave me support for reaffirmation. No, I did not become superhuman in making the necessary choice. I was just a struggling human in the wilderness of life, muddling his way through, trying to find my path. Finding the path was not always easy. Sometimes it seemed to be hidden, hidden by my humanness. I have this child in my mind from so many years ago wanting the easy, fun way, but I have to embrace, nurture, and lead him to the better way.

As I move through this Lenten season, I think I am called to examine those choices that went awry. What can I learn from them? Do I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness? Looking back and examining ourselves, our life, can be a transformative process where we can become more aware of God's presence in our past and his wishes for us. Our temptations are not as daunting as those Jesus faced, yet as he grew stronger in his faith, we can also grow stronger in ours.