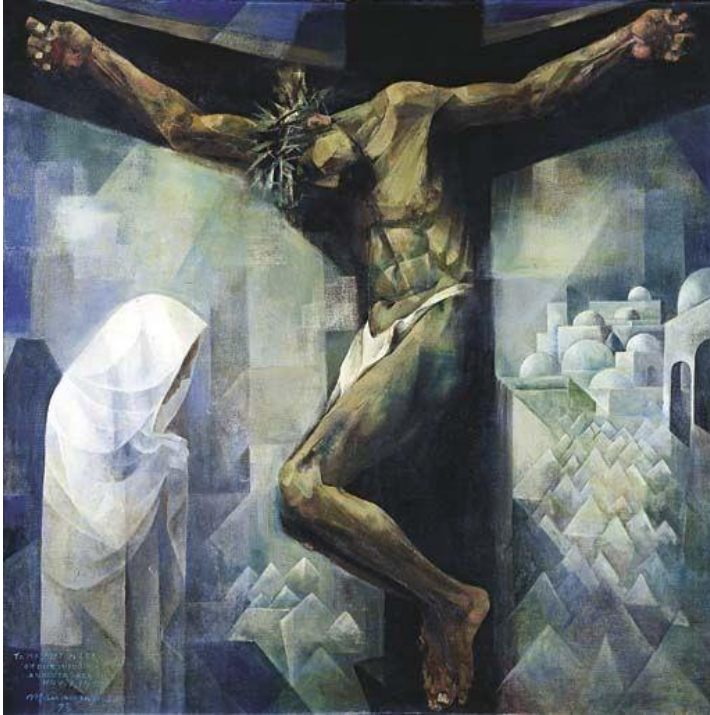


St Matthew's Westminster



Lent Booklet Week IV

*Sunday 19th March -
Saturday 25th March 2023*

An Introduction to Lent

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means *lengthen* and refers to the lengthening days of spring. In many other languages, the word used for this season refers to the 40-day length of the season (*cuaresma* in Spanish, *carême* in French, *quaresima* in Italian) or to the fasting that characterizes it (*Fastenzeit* in German, *fastan* in Swedish, *paasto* in Finnish).

Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The first Sunday of Lent describes Jesus' temptation by Satan; and the sixth Sunday (Palm Sunday), Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent passion and death. Note that the readings during Lent, until Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

Week 3 | Compassion

Christian compassion is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith. At its core, it is a reflection of God's love and mercy towards humanity. Christians are called to show compassion towards others, just as God has shown compassion towards us.

In his life and ministry Jesus showed love and compassion to people regardless of their social status, ethnicity, or background. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and comforted the grieving: he was with people where they were. Compassion is a virtue that calls for action, not just mere sentiment. It requires us to put others before ourselves and to step outside of our own comfort zones. This can be challenging, but it is an essential part of living out our faith, for in so doing we reflect God's love and mercy and bring hope and healing to a hurting world.

Cover: *Crucifixion*, Eduardo Bernabe Rojas

Sunday March 19th *Fourth Sunday of Lent*

Reading

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

Isaiah 61. 1-3

Reflection

Compassion is at the heart of Christianity. It is the foundation of Jesus' teachings and the basis for our faith. When we show compassion to others, we are showing them the same love and mercy that God has shown us. This is the essence of what it means to be a Christian. In a world that can be harsh and unforgiving, compassion is a beacon of hope, a reminder that we are not alone, and that there is always someone who cares for us. Let us strive to be a people of compassion, always ready to reach out to those in need, and to share the love of Christ with all whom we encounter.

Pope Francis

Prayer

O Lord, grant me so to love thee, with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my soul, and my neighbour for thy sake, that the grace of charity and brotherly love may dwell in me, and all envy, harshness, and may die in me; and fill my heart with feelings of love, kindness, and compassion so that, by constantly rejoicing in the happiness and good success of others, by sympathizing with them in their sorrows and putting away all harsh judgments and envious thoughts, I may follow thee, who art thyself the true and perfect love, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday March 20th

Reading

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 2. 16-17

Reflection

Christian compassion is not limited to those who share our beliefs or values. It is a universal virtue that calls us to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, and to do good to those who hate us. This kind of compassion is transformative, both for those who receive it and for those who give it

Desmond Tutu (1931-2021)

Prayer

Lord make us instruments of thy peace.

Where there is hatred let us sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled,

as to console; to be understood, as to understand;

to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

Tuesday March 21st

Reading

Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.
This is my comfort in my distress, that your promise gives me life.
The arrogant utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.
When I think of your ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O Lord.
Psalms 119. 49-52

Reflection

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, *This is not just.*
Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968)

Prayer

O Almighty God, give to thy servant a meek and gentle spirit,
that I may be slow to anger, and easy to mercy and forgiveness.
Give me a wise and constant heart, that I may never be moved
to an intemperate anger for any injury that is done or offered.
Lord, let me ever be courteous, and easy to be entreated;
let me never fall into a peevish or contentious spirit,
but follow peace with all men; offering forgiveness,
inviting them by courtesies, ready to confess my own errors,
apt to make amends, and desirous to be reconciled.
Let no sickness or cross accident, no employment or weariness,
make me angry or ungentle and discontented, or unthankful,
or uneasy to them that minister to me;
but in all things make me like unto the holy Jesus. Amen.
Jeremy Taylor (1613-1637)

Wednesday March 22nd

Reading

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Philippians 2.1-4

Reflection

Compassion is the foundation of all morality. It is what gives rise to our sense of justice, our commitment to human rights, and our desire for peace. Compassion is what enables us to see the intrinsic value and worth of every human being, and to recognize the interconnectedness of all life. It is through compassion that we are able to transcend our own self-interest and to work towards the greater good of all.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

Prayer

Lord,

When I am hungry, send me someone to feed;

When I am thirsty, send me someone who needs a drink;

When I am cold, send me someone to warm;

When I am sad, send me someone to cheer;

When I need understanding, send me someone who needs mine;

When I need to be looked after, send me someone to care for;

When I think only of myself, draw my thoughts to another.

So let us pray as though everything depends on God,

and work as though God depends on us for everything. Amen.

Co-workers of Mother Theresa in Japan

Thursday March 23rd

Reading

With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall
not stumble.

Jeremiah 31.9

Reflection

Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless.

Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.

Henri Nouwen (1932-1996)

Prayer

O Holy Spirit, Love of God infuse thy grace, and descend plentifully into my heart; enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling, and scatter there thy cheerful beams; dwell in that soul that longs to be thy temple; water that barren soil, overrun with weeds and briars, and lost for want of cultivating, and make it fruitful with thy dew from heaven.

Oh come, thou refreshment of them that languish and faint.

Come, thou Star and Guide of them that sail
in the tempestuous sea of the world;

thou only Haven of the tossed and shipwrecked.

Come, thou Glory and Crown of the living,
and only Safeguard of the dying.

Come, Holy Spirit, in much mercy, and make me fit to receive thee.

Amen.

St Augustine (354-430).

Friday March 24th

Reading

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Romans 15. 5-6

Reflection

Compassion is not a sentiment but is an ethical response to the suffering of others. It is grounded in the belief that all human beings are created in the image of God and are therefore worthy of dignity and respect. As Christians, we are called to see the face of Christ in the face of the poor, the sick, and the marginalized, and to act with justice and mercy.
Miroslav Volf (b 1956)

Prayer

O Almighty God, help us to put away all bitterness and wrath and evil-speaking, with all malice. May we possess our souls in patience, however we are tempted and provoked, and not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. Enable us, O God of patience, to bear one another's burdens, and to forbear one another in love. Oh, teach and help us all to live in peace and to love in truth, following peace with all men and walking in love, as Christ loved us, of whom let us learn such meekness and lowliness of heart that in Him we may find rest for our souls. Subdue all bitter resentments in our minds, and let the law of kindness be in our tongues, and a meek and quiet spirit in all our lives. Make us so gentle and peaceable that we may be followers of thee as dear children, that thou, the God of peace, mayest dwell with us forevermore. Amen.
Benjamin Jenks (1646-1724).

Saturday March 25th

Reading

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

2 Corinthians 1. 3-7

Reflection

Compassion is the sometimes fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It's the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too.

Frederick Buechler (1926-2022)

Prayer

Teach us, good Lord,
To serve thee as thou deservest;
To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To toil and not for seek for rest;
To labour and not to ask for any reward
Save that of knowing that we do thy will.
St Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)

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