

Invitation into the Shadows



Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Lent/Eastertide 2025

*Sacred Seasons, a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,
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art by Rachel Farris

Sacred Seasons



Worship Tools for the Creative Church

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for poor and hungry people of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. Since 1991, the group has sought out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of hunger and poverty.

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Contact information: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; 254/498-4997; seedseditor1@gmail.com; www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2025

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A Word about This Packet

When the *Sacred Seasons* Liturgical Team met to plan this Lent/Eastertide packet, we found that we were leaning away from some of the traditional disciplines of Lent. We felt that we are all carrying heavy burdens of anxiety and longing, and that giving up a token thing or adding an activity is not what is needed now. We felt that we all need to rest in the shadow of the Almighty and let our souls heal and grow in preparation for the Easter to come. (Guilherme Almeida's theme interpretation on page 4 expresses this much better.)

You will see many offerings from our liturgical team, which includes Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida from the Baylor University Department of Theatre Arts; Erin Conaway, pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX (home to the Seeds office); Ken Sehested, a founding Seeds editor and writer who lives in Ashville, NC; Sharlande Sledge, retired associate pastor and resident writer at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco; Scott Turner, youth minister at Seventh & James; and Alec Ylitalo, pastor at Richfield Christian Church in Waco. You will sometimes see their names, but their work is everywhere in this packet.

Ken Sehested contributed writings for the Ash Wednesday liturgy, plus the piece "Beloved Is Where We Begin" on page 5 and various other meditations throughout the packet. Erin Conaway wrote the homily for Ash Wednesday on page 8, as well as the calls to worship for most of the Sundays in Lent.

Alec Ylitalo wrote the benedictions for the Lenten Sundays and several other pieces you will find in the liturgies. Sharlande Sledge contributed pieces for Maundy Thursday and Holy Friday, including a guide for a Tenebrae service. Guilherme Almeida chose the music for all 10 liturgies, besides writing the theme interpretation.

You will find a children's sermon about butterflies and cocoons on page 11. You will also find two monologues, taken from the Seeds monologue collections *Easter Walk* and *With Our Own Eyes*. The *Easter Walk* includes monologues from the events of Holy Week, and *With Our Own Eyes* is made up of monologues witnessing to the resurrection appearances of Jesus.

"Mary of Bethany," from the *Easter Walk*, is

from the gospel reading for the fifth Sunday. "The Witness of Thomas the Twin" is a two-part monologue from *With Our Own Eyes*, and can be found after the Easter Sunday liturgy.

We are delighted to include on the cover of this packet our second piece of art by Rachel Farris, who works magic with our themes—some of which are difficult to translate into images. Rachel is a graphic artist in Waco, TX. Other art in these pages was done over the years by several of our beloved Seeds artists.

We are also pleased to introduce a new writer to *Sacred Seasons*, Randall O'Brien, a former religion professor and retired president at Carson-Newman University. His musings on Palm Sunday can be found on page 23.

We hope these musical suggestions, this art and these writings will be inspiring as you create a meaningful Lenten season with and for your community. As always, we are deeply grateful for all of you who subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, and who make use of these gifts in your worship and work. We are counting on you to adapt these contents to your own needs, resources and inclinations. We would love to hear about how you used them.

The contents of this packet are your congregation's to use freely and we want you to share them with others. May we all come to the Easter season having been healed and nourished in the shadows.

Gratefully,
Katie Cook, on behalf of the Seeds staff
and Council of Stewards



art courtesy of Seventh & James Baptist Church

Invitation into the Shadows

A Theme Interpretation

by Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida

i turn westward in
shadows hoping my river
will cross yours in passing.

—Haiku from *like the singing coming off the drums* (Sonia Sanchez, 1998)

This Lenten season we invite you to consider the places of shadow that surround you. We invite you to consider the places of shadow as sites for encounters. The planetary orbit relies on light and shadow relationships to punctuate routines, habits of work and rest, seas billowing, vegetables growing, animals prowling.... Who is there? What happens there, in the shadows? Are the shadows a relief from the sun, or perhaps a darker and uncomfortable space where cold and damp air chills the hope and joy we find in the sun?

What grows in the dark? What is buried beneath earthen layers of compressed sediment, sometimes clay, sometimes ash? What community

is gathered in the shadow of a tree or in the shadow of the earth? Certainly nutrients, minerals, enlivening waters. Perhaps worms and small beetles that aerate the ground, laboring to foment a space in the shadows where seeds can grow. This space where light is dim and coverage is plenty is an abiding space, activated by growth and relief for a season of preparation.

The 40 days and nights of Lent are habit-forming, if we allow the time of such season to bring introspection—alone and in community—and to stay in the darkness, not as escapism from the hard work of the light, but to enjoy protection—respite, even. This is an ancient call of the Church, to return to Lent yearly to learn the rhythms of preparation for Resurrection, to embrace a culture of resistance to inexpensive spirituality, and to seek an awareness of sacrifice that emerges when light moves westward and we're left wandering in dim shadows until the sun emerges again.

We hope this package will provide language through prayer, song, liturgy, and homily for this invitation to the shadows. We encourage you to ask questions about such sweet darkness, about planting and harvesting and the cycles of hiding the seed in darkness, about finding community among other shadow-dwelling siblings who also take refuge beneath shadows. Even God causes shadows to hover over the earth—a disconcerting thought, if you ask me. But what happens there, in the shadows? Who is there? Let us find out together.

—Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida, a native of Brazil, is a senior lecturer in Musical Theater at Baylor University, a Baptist minister specializing in music, a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and a frequent liturgist for Sacred Seasons.



art by Rachel Farris

'Beloved' Is Where We Begin

Instructions for the Onset of Lent's journey

by Ken Sehested

The work of Lent involves both how we allow ourselves to be shaped by, and how we participate with, the power of the Spirit in a world that has lost its way. The Lenten season is traditionally understood as our own metaphorical venture into the wilderness of our own hearts, where we wrestle with demons and are waited on by angels.

The trek is not comfy and may test your limits. It is not for your affliction but to clarify your affection.

Jan Richardson writes a blessing based on Jesus being baptized, hearing God call him "Beloved," and then the Holy Spirit immediately driving him into the wilderness for 40 days. In her blessing, she reminds us that during this journey, it is crucial to remember our identity as God's Beloved:

*If you would enter into the wilderness,
do not begin without a blessing.
Do not leave without hearing who you are:
Beloved, named by the One
who has traveled this path before you.*

So, find an honored place in your soul—where you pass by frequently—to hang this admonition. Put a flashing neon light as its background. Enclose this reminder as in a mezuzah on your doorpost, touching it in your goings out and your comings in.

Wear it around your neck as an amulet, pressed against your skin, leeching its reminder directly into your bloodstream: Fear not, fear not!

Then lace your heart with its heavy-duty boots as you venture into this wild terrain of your own soul, unvexed at the prospect of danger, fear, hunger, thirst, scorching sun and dark of night. All the while expectant that you are being tracked by the Hound of Heaven who will guide you at the edge of every precipice, who will find you, and remind you, who and Whose you are.

The Loveliest One's own heart palpitates with delight at the very sound of your name.

—Ken Sehested was one of the founding editors of the Seeds ministry in Decatur, GA. He is now a member of the Seeds Board of Advisors and the Sacred Seasons liturgical team. He was the founding director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. He is the curator for the online journal Prayer&Politiks.



art by Sally Lynn Askins

A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

(for two readers and the congregation)

FIRST READER: Dearly beloveds, the ashen moment stakes its claim upon us in this midweek assembly, and the Word is announced by trumpet's blast rather than a piccolo's peep.

MANY: *We approach the hour of trembling.*

SECOND READER: But the Beloved One who nestled with us even in our gestation—this One has a reprimand to announce.

FIRST READER: In the midst of our modern conveniences—in our sheltered presumptions, our decent good order, our fashioned attire, and our tamed and housebroken piety—we have all but lost the capacity for trembling.

MANY: *Ash Wednesday is when we are confronted anew that the faith we espouse is consequential; that there are convictional repercussions for this assembly's profession.*



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

SECOND READER: If there is no skin in the game, then the sanctity we display is all for show; the offerings we make, all smoke and no fire.

MANY: *If our ascetic practices fail to include loosening the bonds of injustice, freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry and relieving the agony of the aggrieved, then our reverence is all wax and no wick.*

FIRST READER: We have no claim on the promises of God short of the practices of life immersed in the pathos of God in a world beset by ruin and predicated on violence.

MANY: *But blessed are we in doing the truth in compliance with Heaven's appeal and the Spirit's bias.*

SECOND READER: Then shall our light break forth like the dawn; then shall a river of mercy and a garden of abundance erupt; our wreckage, mended; our breaches, repaired; our streets, restored.

FIRST READER: Let the ashen smudge announce our confidence that dust is not the last word.

—Ken Sehested

Opening Hymn

"Unsettled World"

Words: David Sparks

Music: Hal H. Hopson

THUNDER BAY 8.8.8.8.8.

Hymnal: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2183

Meditation of Confession

Easter is the great Christian celebration,
but Easter is not our call.

Sunday is not our call.

Friday is our call...Good Friday.

Easter Sunday is our hope.

Good Friday is our lives radically committed.

Easter Sunday is the promise

such lives can claim.

Today we are called to embrace our ashes,
our dust,
to embrace our mortality,
our dependence on God,
to embrace the difficulty of our crosses
with joyful hearts.

—John S. Ballenger

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Hymn

“I Take the Cross of Jesus Christ”

Words: R. G. Huff

Music: Trad. English Melody,

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

KINGSFOLD Common Meter Double

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 168

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 51:1-17

Hymn

“The Storm Is Coming”

Words: Sylvia Dunstan

Music: Griffith Hugh Jones

LLEF Long Meter

Chalice Hymnal No. 181

Reading from the Epistles

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Hymn

“Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley”

Words and Music: American Spiritual,

arr. Bill Thomas, 1994

LONESOME VALLEY 8.8.10.8.

Chalice Hymnal No. 211

Reading from the Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Meditation of Commitment

Ash Wednesday’s gospel text is surely a call to each of us to become what we do: to become the heart that is so generous, whose largesse is so reckless that there is not damping flow in the face of need. To become the remorse that is so deep and the self-knowledge that is so keen that we can’t possibly abide destructive criticism of the other—any other. To become the human beat of the heart of

God, to radiate an intimacy so intense that nothing dulls the sense of the presence of God in creation.

...When we have put down the glut of our own lives, we will stand in the rain without knowing we’re wet and cry for the unprotected children of America. When we ourselves have become sin, we will speak weepingly for those we murder in the name of our righteousness. When we have become the prayer we pray, we will see the face of God in everyone we meet.

—adapted from Joan Chittister’s

“Lent: Not Behaviors but Series of Questions,”

National Catholic Reporter

Homily

See “Who Knows?” on page 8.

Imposition of Ashes

Benediction

Let us journey together through this season of Lent.

Let us listen to stories of exile

and hear cries for hope.

Let us reach out

for the hand of Jesus

and walk a path of dangerous love

into the possibility of new life.

—April Baker & Amy Mears

“Be not afraid...
for lo, I am with you always,
even unto the end of the world.”

He says he is with us on our
journeys. He says he has been
with us since each of our
journeys began.

Listen for him.

Listen to the sweet and bitter airs
of your present and your past for
the sound of him.

—Frederick Buechner,
The Sacred Journey

Who Knows?

A Homily for Ash Wednesday

by Erin Conaway

Text: Joel 2:1-2;12-17

A Song on the End of the World

by Czeslaw Milosz (translated by Anthony Milosz)

On the day the world ends
A bee circles a clover,
A fisherman mends a glimmering net.
Happy porpoises jump in the sea,
By the rainspout young sparrows are playing
And the snake is gold-skinned
as it should always be.

On the day the world ends
Women walk through the fields
under their umbrellas,
A drunkard grows sleepy at the edge of a lawn,
Vegetable peddlers shout in the street
And a yellow-sailed boat comes nearer the island,
The voice of a violin lasts in the air
And leads into a starry night.

And those who expected lightning and thunder
Are disappointed.
And those who expected signs
and archangels' trumpets
Do not believe it is happening now.
As long as the sun and the moon are above,
As long as the bumblebee visits a rose,
As long as rosy infants are born
No one believes it is happening now.

Only a white-haired old man,
who would be a prophet
Yet is not a prophet, for he's much too busy,
Repeats while he binds his tomatoes:
There will be no other end of the world,
There will be no other end of the world.¹

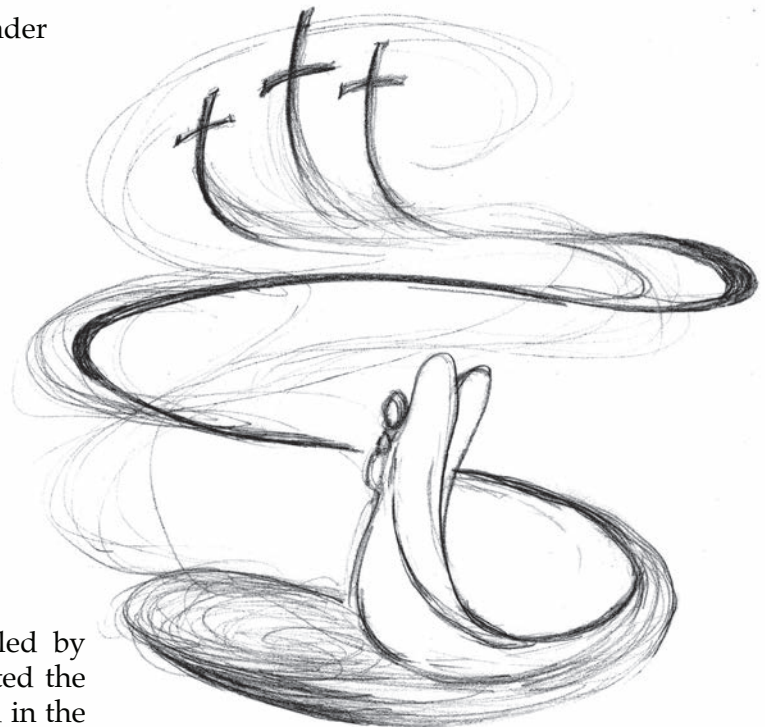
—Warsaw, 1944

The Warsaw Uprising of 1944 was quelled by the Germans. The people in Warsaw noted the Germans retreating in other parts of Poland in the face of the Russian Armies advancing. The peo-

ple found hope in the predicted momentum of the Russian Army, so they rose up and fought for their city. It was a disaster. Approximately 45,000 Armia Krajowa (AK) soldiers and 2,500 soldiers from other places initiated the revolt. After two months of fighting, the number of victims exceeded 180,000 plus 11,000 members of the AK who were taken as prisoners. The city was reduced to ruins.

Milosz depicts a very normal day in the life of the world. Ordinary things are happening, but it's the song at the end of the world. I've read several interpretations of this poem all of which take it in a different direction. I tend to think he's writing about how the world is ending for people in certain parts while the rest go merrily along.

And this is how the world will end—our apathy for our neighbors will finally be the last straw.



art by Sally Lynn Askins

Milosz said in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1980: “In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot.”

Our Old Testament lesson for Ash Wednesday comes from the book of Joel. This is an impossible book to date because there are no real textual clues like the mention of a king or some other world event. That makes it hard to put into context. But based on what it says, things are bad and about to get ruinously worse. Chapter one describes an epic swarm of locusts: “what the cutting locust left, the

Things are bad. They were bad then, and they are bad now. We tend to think, like the poet says, if rosy babies are still being born, how bad can it be?

swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten; and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.”

He calls on the people to fast—to put on sackcloth and lament and wail and cry out to the Lord.

But we don’t know what exactly was wrong; we just know it was a lot for Joel and, we assume, for the people around him. The idea is that God is Lord of the locusts and can call them off at any moment. This was during a season in the history of our theology when they assumed God was in control of everything that happened and therefore had to figure out a way to incorporate all worldly and regional events into God’s mysterious plan.

There are certainly people who continue to believe that today—maybe even here. I think God is more powerful than anything else that exists. I believe God can intervene in our lives and does so through a variety of means. But I don’t think God aims hurricanes or tornadoes at specific cities. I also don’t think God directs locusts or the Covid virus or cancer cells for that matter.

Maybe that’s splitting hairs. I certainly had a season in my life when I had to work through my anger with God not for causing my mom’s or my wife’s cancer, but for not stopping it from happening. I prayed, “God I don’t think this is your doing, but you at least let it happen in the sense that you

allow this kind of suffering to happen in the world when, as far as I can tell, you could stop it. But you don’t.”

My peace with this, though, comes in the knowledge that God suffers with us. God is present with us in the suffering and not far away just watching it happen on a heavenly recliner eating Skittles.

Things are bad. They were bad then, and they are bad now. We tend to think, like the poet says, if rosy babies are still being born, how bad can it be? Joel wants us all to turn back to God because regardless of what’s happening in the world or in your world, that is our best posture. Towards God.

And I love this part: verse 14 says, “Who knows whether (God) will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him.” The “who knows” is what saves us. It keeps us from treating God like a cosmic vending machine with prayers going in and blessings coming out. I want something really bad. I fast and that gets me the premium level of blessing. I wear sackcloth and rub ashes on my head, so now I’m at the platinum level and God really owes me big time.

No, Joel says, “Who knows?” We don’t know that our weeping and wailing, our penitent actions will bring the outcome we want, because God is still God. This isn’t the prosperity Gospel where you do your part and God will bless you with the things you want. The way this works is that you do what is right because it is right. Turning toward God, repenting of your sin—that’s what we are supposed to do. That’s what God is calling us to do—return to me with all your heart, rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Then Joel reminds us of all that we don’t know about God. We don’t know how this particular pain will end or increase, why certain things happen to other people and not to me; why God allows some things but seems to intervene in others. Of all that we don’t know about God, what we do know is this: God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Tonight, we put ashes on our foreheads as a symbol of our hearts turning back to God and away from whatever would come between us. And I think tonight we put ashes on our foreheads to remind our hearts that there are sisters and brothers around the world, and some in this room, who are desperately begging God for relief from their pain.

Please see “Who Knows?” on page 12.

A Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

The psalmist imagines us abiding in the shadow of the Almighty. Shadows don't immediately evoke peace, but rather suspicion. We can't see in the shadows, and we don't like it when our illusion of control is taken away. But God invites us into a season of mystery; a season of contemplation without conclusions; a season of shadow exploration; a season of Lent. Let us move faithfully into this unknown like children behind the security of a parent's leg.

—Erin Conaway

Meditation of Preparation

Jesus performed much of his ministry in urban settings, yet many of his most transformative moments occurred in outdoor settings—bodies of water, mountaintops and wilderness. The wilderness of the Bible is a liminal space— an in-between place where ordinary life is suspended, identity shifts and new possibilities emerge. Through the experiences of the Israelites in exile, we learn that, while the Biblical wilderness is a place of danger, temptation and chaos, it is also a place for solitude, nourishment and revelation from God. These themes emerge again in Jesus' journey into the wilderness, tying his identity to that of his Hebrew ancestors.

—Jenny Phillips

Hymn

"In the Bulb There Is a Flower"

Words and Music: Natalie Sleeth, 1986

PROMISE 8.7.8.7.D

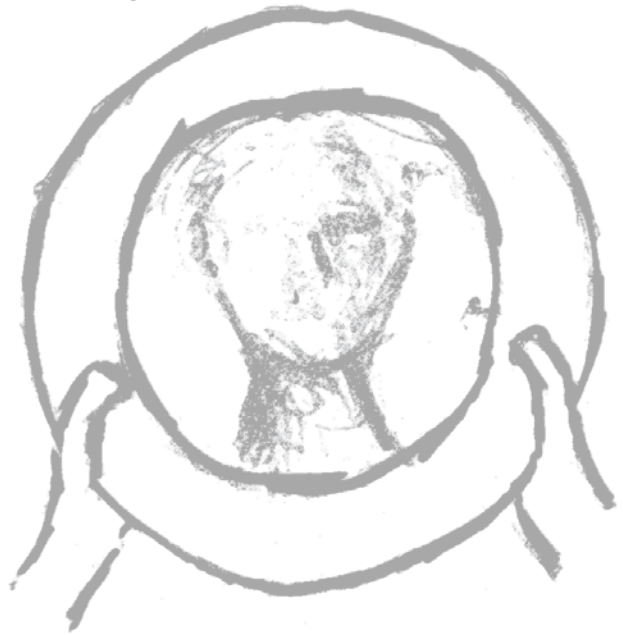
Chalice Hymnal No. 638

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Hymn

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

Words and Music: African American Spiritual,
arr. J. Jefferson Cleveland and Verolga Nix
SOJOURNER

Hymnal: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 130

Epistle Reading

Romans 10:8b-13

Gospel Reading

Luke 4:1-13

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

The dictionary description of a wilderness is a wild place untouched by human development. There is wildness about the place that causes us to reconsider ways of doing things and focusing on the priorities. In the wilderness, you feel alone, out of place,

Please see "First Sunday" on page 12.

A Lesson about Butterflies & Cocoons:

A Children's Sermon

adapted from a children's sermon by LeAnna Bryant Anantaraman

Materials needed:

- Illustrations of the metamorphic stages of a caterpillar/butterfly
- Butterfly stickers

Part 1: Near the Beginning of Lent

First, show the children pictures of a caterpillar. Ask them what they know about caterpillars. Ask questions like, "Did you know the caterpillar is not always going to look like this?"

Next, show the children pictures of a cocoon. Ask "Do you see a caterpillar in this picture? What

happens to this caterpillar?" Explain that the caterpillar will become a beautiful butterfly, but it has to go into the cocoon first and spend almost two weeks in it.

Then show pictures of a butterfly coming out of the cocoon. Ask, "What's happening in this picture?" Explain that the former caterpillar has spent its time in the cocoon, growing and changing into a butterfly.

Talk to them about Lent—about the colors in the worship space and about the different things that happen in your church during Lent. Explain that Lent is for us a time that's like a caterpillar going into a cocoon. We need to spend this time growing and learning, so that, when Easter comes, we will be ready to spread our wings like a butterfly.

Part 2. Easter Sunday

Talk to the children about this Special Sunday being the end of a long time in Lent. Tell them about the events that led up to the resurrection. Show them the pictures that you showed them earlier, and say, "Remember when we looked at these pictures and talked about the caterpillar going into a cocoon? Now that Lent is over, it's time to come out of the cocoon." Explain that the Easter story is similar to the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Say

Please see "Butterflies" on page 12.



art by Robin Ripley

Who Knows, continued from page 9

We remember we are dust and to dust we shall return—and that includes our neighbors in Gaza who have the dust of their homes and schools and markets in their lungs instead of on their foreheads. Our siblings in Israel who have buried mothers and

This isn't the prosperity Gospel where you do your part and God will bless you with the things you want. The way this works is that you do what is right because it is right.

daughters, fathers and sons and who are actively wrestling with what mercy looks like in the hands holding all of the power. When will it be enough?

We remember our sisters for whom the world has ended as they've been mistreated and mistrusted when they tell what has happened to them. We remember those whose world is ending one faded memory at a time and those who try to love them, even when their loved one doesn't remember their name.

We place ashes for our sin and the sin of our systems that still pick winners and losers among us. We place ashes of repentance expressing our desire to turn back to God for our sake and the sake of everyone else. Not to manipulate God into action, but to receive, to recognize, to remember God's mercy and abounding love.

Let us repent together.

—Erin Conaway, a native of Midland, TX, is a member of the Sacred Seasons liturgical team and a frequent contributor to Seeds publications. He is the pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed.

Endnote

1. Accessed from the Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org).

art by Sally Lynn Askins

First Sunday, continued from page 10

abandoned, disoriented, and inadequate and not in control. Welcome to the transformation chamber! Here, all wild urges and out-of-control personalities are brought under the authority of Jesus Christ. —Moses Asamoah, *Sweetly Broken: Into the Wilderness*

Hymn of Commitment

“A New Commandment”

Words: John 13:34-35

Music: Anonymous

NEW COMMANDMENT

Hymnal: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 134

Benediction

Embark on your journey of Lent by entering into the shadow of the Almighty. Dwell there over the coming weeks, trust in the Lord to bear you up through the journey, that you would find discernment, transformation and purpose. Embrace your time in the shadows throughout the days ahead, friends, for growth and development take time and intention.

—Alec Ylitalo

Butterflies, continued from page 11

something like, “Jesus lived many years serving God. Many people did not like what he did and taught, so they did a bad thing and killed him. But, just like the caterpillar doesn't stay in the cocoon, Jesus did not stay in the tomb where they buried him. And just like the butterfly is beautiful when it comes out of the cocoon, Jesus was also beautiful when he came out of the tomb.”

Give each child a butterfly sticker and say something like “This sticker is to remind us that Jesus is alive and beautiful. When we act like Jesus, we are beautiful, too.”

—LeAnna Bryant Anantaraman has taught for many years in the Cobb County school system in Marietta, GA.

A Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Lent

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

Abram was lost and confused. The way forward was unclear and impossible. God invited him into the darkness. He wanted light, God beckoned him into night. He wanted to see the way, God invited him into the mystery of the stars. He wanted to know...God gave him mystery and he believed. Can we follow bravely into this good night and sit in it long enough for our eyes to adjust and see the stars of God's promise?

—Erin Conaway

Meditation of Preparation

To journey for the sake of saving our own lives is little by little to cease to live in any sense that really matters, even to ourselves, because it is only by journeying for the world's sake—even when the world bores and sickens and scares you half to death—that little by little we start to come alive.

—Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*

Hymn

“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

Words: Elizabeth C. Clephane

Music: Frederick C. Maker

ST. CHRISTOPHER 7.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.

The New Century Hymnal No. 190

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Responsive Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 27

Hymn

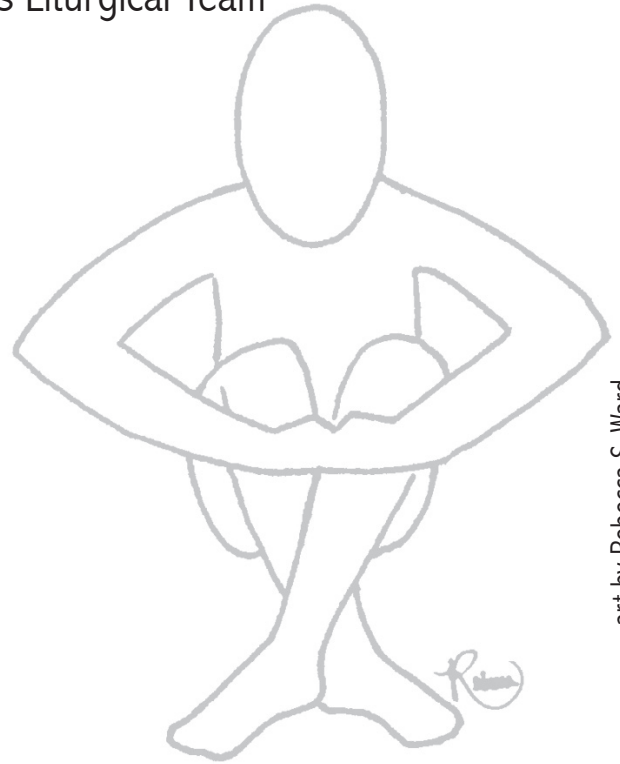
“Lord Jesus, Sun of Righteousness”

Words: Latin Hymn, tr. Anne K. LeCroy

Music: Harold Drake, alt.

CORNHILL Common Meter

The Hymnal 1982 No. 144



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Epistle Reading

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Gospel Reading

Luke 13:31-35, or

Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

I must love the questions themselves
as Rilke said
like locked rooms full of treasure
to which my blind
and groping key does not yet fit
and await the answers as unsealed letters
mailed with dubious intent
and written in a very foreign

Please see “Second Sunday” on page 16.

A Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Lent

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

"In the shadow of your wings, I sing for joy." The psalmist's heart soars from the shadows. God's wing overhead like a mother hen keeping her chicks safe, warm, covered, and loved. Let us search the shadows this morning for our song of joy and sing it together.

—Erin Conaway

Meditation of Preparation

The spiritual quest is not for interesting "spiritual experiences" but for the expansion of our capacity for mercy, the opening of our hearts wide enough to embrace the world, and not just the fragments of it, here and there, which at present we manage to feel with and care about.

—Martin L. Smith, *A Season for the Spirit*

Hymn

"We Meet You, O Christ"

Words: Fred Kaan

Music: Carl F. Schalk

STANLEY BEACH 10.10.11.11.

Chalice Hymnal No. 183

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 55:1-9

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 63:1-8

Hymn

"Healer of Our Every Ill"

Words and Music: Marty Haugen

HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL 8.8.6.3.

with Refrain

Hymnal: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2213

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Gospel Reading

Luke 13:1-9

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

I am a man of losses, regrets, and griefs.
I am an old man full of love. I am a man of faith.
But faith is not necessarily, nor not soon,
a resting place.

Faith puts you out on a wide river in a little boat,
in the fog, in the dark.

Please see "Third Sunday" on page 16.



art by Kate Thomason

A Liturgy for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

In the parable of the loving father, the prodigal son “came to himself” and realized his place in his father’s heart and home. He didn’t find himself in the lavish living. He didn’t find himself in the far country. It wasn’t until he was in the shadow of the pigs, longing for their food that he remembered who he was and whose he was. May we search the shadows of our own heartbreaks to remember we are God’s children made to spend eternity at home.
—Erin Conaway

Meditation of Preparation

I do not at all understand the mystery of grace—only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.
—Anne Lamott

Hymn

“God Is Love”
Words & Music: Samuel Batt Owens
Hymnal: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 137

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Joshua 5:9-12

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 32

Hymn

“An Outcast among Outcasts”
Words: Richard D. Leach
Music: Dan Damon
POST STREET 7.6.7.6.D
The New Century Hymnal No. 201

Reading from the Epistles

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Gospel Reading

Luke 15:1-32

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

The dawn breaks.
Day lies ahead.
One thinks on a
journey of those things past,
and what the future might become.
Between the places—
coming from and going to—
lies a peaceful hope.
Not a longing but a quiet hour.
Thinking of the faces
that make the journey soft,
the winter becomes
simply a moment of transition
waiting for the deliverance of spring.
—Marc Ellis,
A Year at the Catholic Worker

Please see “Fourth Sunday” on page 16.

art by Rebecca S. Ward



Second Sunday, continued from page 13

tongue. and in the hourly making of myself
no thought of Time to force,
to squeeze the space I grow into.
–Alice Walker, “Reassurance”

Hymn of Commitment

“Give Me a Clean Heart”

Words and Music: Margaret J. Douroux;

arr. Albert Denis Tessier

DOUROUX 10.12.10.10.

The New Century Hymnal No. 188

Benediction

As you continue to enter deeper into the shadows of Lent, look up to the stars like Abram who counted their numbers. Realize the revelation of God’s work in the darkness, realize the covenants made and kept even in what seemed like terrifying moments, realize that even in the depths, the light eventually will pierce through. Continue to walk in the shadows, deeper and deeper, but with the assurance of the one who walks beside you and keeps the covenant of love.

–Alec Ylitalo

Third Sunday, continued from page 14

Even a man of faith knows that...
we’ve all got to go through enough to kill us.
–Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow*

Hymn of Commitment

“Friends in Faith”

Words: Delores Dufner

Music: W. Walker’s *Southern Harmony* (1835)

RESTORATION 5.5.5.5.5.5.4.

Hymnal: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 135

Benediction

At this point along the journey, pause and feel your roots seeping out into the darkness of the earth as you take in the Word, as you walk along the Way.

Like the fig tree, sometimes it takes time, sometimes it takes care, sometimes it takes effort, but the tireless work deep within eventually allows us to transform and bear much fruit. While your growth may seem slow at this time, and the light shining seems so far away, continue to push forward this week in hope.

–Alec Ylitalo



art by Erin Conaway

Fourth Sunday, continued from page 15

Hymn of Commitment

“I Would Be True”

Words: Howard Arnold Walter

Music: Joseph Yates Peek

PEEK 11.10.11.10.10.

Chalice Hymnal No. 608

Benediction

It’s easy to get lost in the shadows; we’ve been on this journey for weeks now. What seemed to begin as a dwelling place now feels heavy as we dive deeper. Confession weighs on the soul; our sins make us trudge slower and slower. As we continue into the depths of introspection, may we be reminded constantly that forgiveness awaits, that steadfast love surrounds, and that this shadow that seems overwhelming is still the shelter of the Lord.

–Alec Ylitalo

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

We live in dark times—with countless people all over the world suffering from war, genocide and natural catastrophes, many of them brought about by our abuse of the environment. Sometimes we feel that the weight of all of that suffering is about to suffocate us. Sometimes we feel as though we stand in the rubble of our endeavors, covered in the ashes of our dreams. But, as my former student, David Lane, wrote years ago when he was in high school, darkness and chaos have to cover the face of the deep before the spirit can brood over it and call out life. I think this is the definition of Lent. And it is our hope.

—Katie Cook

Lent beckons us to peer into the face of tragedy, in the world at large and even in our own selves. Not because God is a sadist and has need of masochists. But because mercy is available—the opportunity to reverse history’s brutal momentum, to bridge relations’ fracture, to reestablish neighborliness, to re-center life to its true Midpoint, its accurate Plumb, its proper Alignment, to take shelter under the wings of the Most High.

—Ken Sehested

Each of us is called to prophetic agony—to speak the Word, to do justice and righteousness. We are most truly ourselves when we live within God’s insecurity, acknowledging Yahweh’s sovereignty over creation, taking full responsibility as contingent creatures who yet must decide and act. Future is created out of past by those who live the present. Wherever history is unfolding, faith demands response. In the face of God-encounter, indifference does not suffice.

—Martin Bell

Jesus was not killed by atheism and anarchy. He was brought down by law and order allied with religion, which is always a deadly mix. Beware those who claim to know the mind of God and who are prepared to use force, if necessary, to make others conform. Beware those who cannot tell God’s will from their own. Temple police are always a bad sign. When chaplains start wearing guns and hanging out at the sheriff’s office, watch out. Someone is about to have no king but Caesar. There are

many ways to tell the story of what happened on Good Friday.

—Barbara Brown Taylor, *A Deadly Mix*

If we would follow Jesus, we must take certain definite steps. The first step, which follows the call, cuts the disciple off from his previous existence. The call to follow at once produces a new situation. To stay in the old situation makes discipleship impossible. Levi must leave the receipt of custom and Peter his nets in order to follow Jesus. One would have thought that nothing so drastic was necessary at such an early stage. Could not Jesus have initiated the publicans into some new religious experience, and leave them as they were before? He could have done so, had he not been the incarnate Son of God. But since he is the Christ, he must make it clear from the start that his word is not an abstract doctrine, but the recreation of the whole life of man. The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*



art by Sally Lynn Askins

A Liturgy for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

The prophet Isaiah tells us the Lord is going to do a new thing. We believe God is still doing new things in our lives and in our world. A way forms in the wilderness. A river grows in the desert. New skin covers old wounds. Relationships are repaired. Hatred falls flat in the face of love. Barriers of separation fall. Those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Light finds us in the darkness.

—Erin Conaway

Meditation of Preparation

For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life—pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures—and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair. Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Return of the Prodigal Son*

Hymn

“We Sing of God, the Mighty Source of All Things”

Words: Christopher Smart

Music: Samuel Sebastian Wesley

CORNWALL 8.8.6.8.8.6.

The Hymnal 1982 No. 386

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 43:16-21

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 126

Hymn

“Ah, Holy Jesus”

Words: Johann Heermann,

paraphr. Robert Bridges

Music: Johann Crüger

HERZLIEBSTER JESU 11.11.11.5.

The New Century Hymnal No. 218

Please see “Fifth Sunday” on page 20.



art by Sally Lynn Askins

Mary of Bethany

A Monologue from the Seeds Easter Walk

Editor's Note: Easter Walk is a dramatic production, conceived and enacted yearly at Seventh & James Baptist Church, and published by Seeds. Sometime during Holy Week, children (and, in many churches, all congregants) go from scene to scene and hear monologues from characters who describe very recent encounters with Jesus during the last days before his death. The children carry baskets or bags in which they keep tokens from each scene to help them remember what happened. "Mary of Bethany" was written with the help of Mark McClintock. When the Mary of Bethany scene is included, she will have cinnamon sticks or some other aromatic herb to give to the children as a token to remember her story.

Scripture: John 12:1-8. See also Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-19—here it is an unnamed woman at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany; Luke 7:36-40—here it is an unnamed woman at the house of a Pharisee.

Setting: Mary is dressed simply but elegantly, as if she has some wealth but chooses not to use it on clothing. She is in a small, darkened room where it looks as

though some people were gathered to eat and drink and relax. Her main props are a towel and an empty, fancy perfume jar.

My name is Mary, and I live in Bethany—that's a small town right outside Jerusalem—with my sister Martha and my brother Lazarus. You may remember stories about how my brother died and Jesus brought him back to life. Really!! And there was another time that I was listening to Jesus teach and my sister got mad at me for not doing the housework.

But Jesus took up for me. But I bet you all want to hear about the night Jesus and his disciples came to dinner at our house. Yes? I knew it! Everyone wants to hear about it, especially since I poured a really expensive jar of perfume on his head and feet, and everyone thought I was crazy. But I'm not crazy.... I just had a really strong feeling that it was the right thing to do. And I still think it was right.

About six days before Passover, I was helping Martha prepare for dinner one night when there was a knock at the door; and who do you think it was? It was Jesus and the disciples!

We had heard that Jesus had been in Jerusalem, so we were hoping that he would come to our house. Fortunately, we had made plenty of food, so we helped them wash their hands and put the food on the table.

As they started to eat, I thought to myself, "This is Jesus—the teacher whom I loved, and who everybody was saying was the Messiah—eating at our table! Surely there is something special I can do for him."

I got up and ran into my bedroom as fast as I could and got an alabaster jar filled with an expensive ointment my father had given to me as a little girl. I was so pleased with my idea that I ran up behind him, broke the alabaster bottle of ointment, and poured the perfume all over his head and his feet.

While I was washing his feet with my hair—that's how someone like me shows how much we love someone—I could hear some of



art from St. Mary Press

the disciples complaining. Judas was getting angry at me for not selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. I guess I could have done that; I know Jesus said to do all we could for the poor.

But you know what? Jesus defended me. Me! He said, "Leave her alone; why are you giving her a hard time? She is performing a good service for me. There will always be poor men and women around you can give money to, but I will not always be around. This woman, Mary, has done all she can, she has anointed me in preparation for my death. Whenever my story is told, let her story be told as well in remembrance of her."

Can you believe that? He stood up to his own disciples for me. He took up for me—again. I didn't like what he was saying about dying, but I really didn't understand all of that at the time.

—*The Easter Walk collection includes 12 monologues and dramatic scenes from the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday morning—although we recommend only producing seven in one evening. For a copy of Easter Walk or With Our Own Eyes, a collection of monologues about the resurrection appearances in the gospels, write to seedseditor1@gmail.com or go to www.seedspublishers.org/worship.*

Fifth Sunday, continued from page 18

Epistle Reading

Philippians 3:4b-14

Gospel Reading

John 12:1-8 (See *Mary of Bethany* on page 19.)

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

For Ragamuffins, God's name is Mercy. We see our darkness as a prized possession because it drives us into the heart of God. Without mercy our darkness would plunge us into despair—for some, self-destruction. Time alone with God reveals the unfathomable depths of the poverty of the spirit. We are so poor that even our poverty is not our own: It belongs to the *mysterium tremendum* of a loving God.

—Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*

Hymn of Commitment

"What Wondrous Love Is This"

Words: Stith Mead's *General Selection*, 1811

Music: William Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1840,

arr. William J. Reynolds

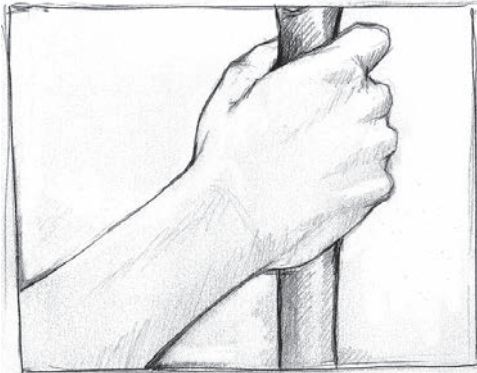
WONDROUS LOVE 12.9.12.12.9.

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 171

Benediction

Something new is about to spring up. It is almost time to reap what we've sown in the shadows of Lent. Friends, press on towards the goal, knowing that the Lord will make a way in the wilderness, make rivers flow in the desert and shine a lamp upon your feet as you continue to find your way, to grow, and to transform through the darkness in which you have dwelt.

—Alec Ylitalo



art by Sally Lynn Askins

So, if we dare, let us take the hand of Jesus, set our faces with him toward Jerusalem and, indeed, toward all the locations where power is misused and abused. Let us move forward with a new way of sharing power and a new way loving one another, a new way of speaking truth and a new way spreading good news.

—April Baker & Amy Mears

A Liturgy for Palm Sunday

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

Not all stones fit the project. Some are misshapen by heat and pressure. Some are malformed by water and time. Some are cut too deep by careless hands. The psalmist reminds us the stone of grace and love, the one the builders rejected because it didn't fit the way they viewed the world, has become the cornerstone. Meekness is revealed to be true power; grace and mercy will overshadow vengeance; life will swallow up death; and the light will shine brightly in the shadows. Lord give us courage, grace, and peace.

—Erin Conaway

Meditation of Preparation

That Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem on a donkey shows that he was trying to make a point. But what was that point? He was not dressed as a warrior or any kind of ruler. He was not accompanied by an army. He was riding a colt, a young donkey, instead of a war horse. He had told stories on the way to this city about an upside-down kingdom. Now he was acting like an upside-down king.

—Katie Cook, "The Absurd Parade"

Hymn

"Praise, Praise, Praise the Lord"

Words & Music: Traditional Cameroonian Song

AFRICAN PROCESSIONAL Irregular Meter

Hymnal: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2035

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 31:9-16

Hymn

"Mantos y Palmas / Filled with Excitement"

Words and Music: Rubén Ruíz Avila,
tr. Gertrude C. Suppe, arr. Alvin Schutmaat
HOSANNA 10.10.10.11

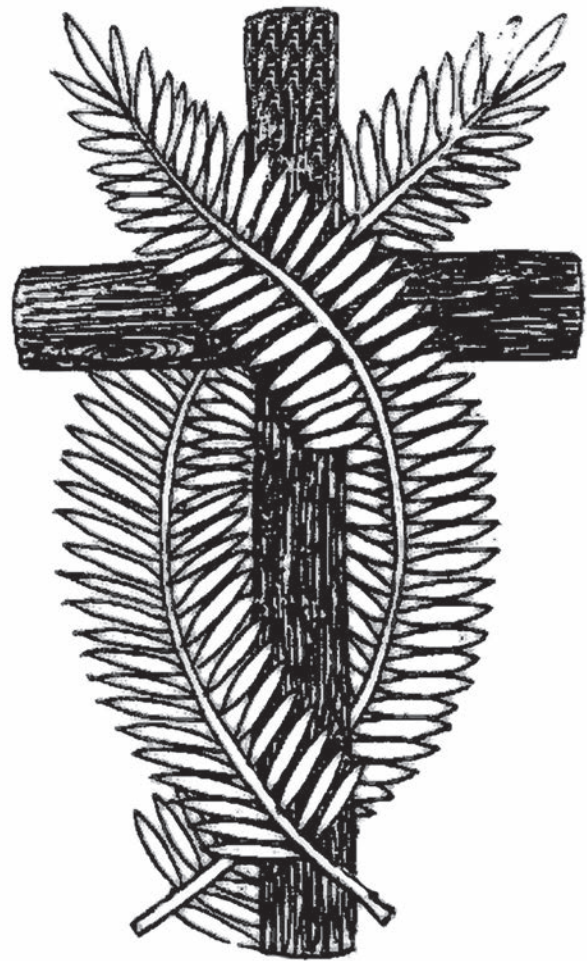
Hymnal: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 133

Epistle Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel Reading

Luke 19:28-40



art by Nancy Cagle

Litany for Holy Week

One: He comes to you on a colt never ridden, his face set before you like flint.

Many: O God, you are our help! Tell us: Who is this carpenter-king?

One: Do you not recognize the Bethlehem baby, who arrived to the singing of angels and slept in the silence of awe?

Many: The baby who inspired the joy of the angels? And kindled the hope of the peoples? Glory to you in the highest, and peace to all on earth!

One: Do you not recognize the temple youth, who questioned the answers of sages and answered the questions of teachers?

Many: The youth who amazed the minds of the elders? And astonished the hearts of his parents?

One: And do you not recognize the Nazareth prophet, who proclaimed release to the captives and demanded relief for the poor?

Many: The prophet who preached salvation for our foes and was thrown out of our city? Who is he to be glorified? How can he be the Chosen One?

One: Do you not recognize the messiah, who established the kingdom for servants and sinners?

Many: The messiah who sleeps in the house of outcasts and feasts at the table of sinners? Who is he to be glorified? How can he be the Chosen One?

One: He comes to us on a colt that none has ever ridden. How soon will we take him to a tomb where none has ever laid?

—From a worship guide at Lake Shore Baptist Church, Waco, TX

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

Jesus refused to conform to the expectations of the people. He chose to travel around, hanging out with riffraff, healing and feeding people and preaching about peace. The reign of which he spoke was crazy, topsy-turvy. His entry into the city of his royal forefathers was an absurd parade.

His whole ministry was like a Feast of Fools. Whoever was in power should be out of power, he said. Whoever is up should be down. Whoever is first should be last.... Perhaps our reaction today, after reading the story of Jesus' absurd parade, should be to seek out marginalized folks, to do

something that doesn't make sense, to find a way to turn something upside-down.

—Katie Cook, "The Absurd Parade"

Hymn of Commitment

"Golden Breaks the Dawn"

Words: Tzu-chen Chao, paraphr. Frank W. Price

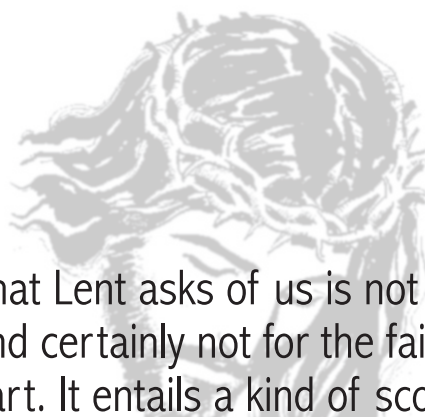
Music: Chinese Folk Tune, adapt. Te-ngai Hu
LE P'ING 10.10.10.10.

The New Century Hymnal No. 470

Benediction

Go into this Holy Week encountering the depths of the Passion, entering into the darkest moments that humanity has to offer, but also knowing that the Lord's steadfast love endures throughout every doubt and betrayal, every excruciating cry, every last breath. Prepare to emerge from the shadows, for your long wait is almost over as the light prepares to pierce the shadows that we may join in the beauty of the resurrection that awaits.

—Alec Ylitalo



What Lent asks of us is not easy,
and certainly not for the faint of
heart. It entails a kind of scouring,
a frightful vulnerability, a willingness
to relinquish assumed identity.
Here the guardrails come down;
the escape hatch is closed; the
rationales dissipate; the certainties
undermined. Like Peter, we protest
that salvation's destiny should
endure

a shameful crucifixion.

—Ken Sehested

art courtesy of the Franciscanos Cruz Blanco

Thoughts for Palm Sunday

by Randall O'Brien

Overheard in the church parking lot:

"Say, someone said you taught Hebrew in a couple of universities."

"Yeah, guess I did, years ago, in the '80s and '90s. Probably know just enough now to be as dangerous as tornadoes in a trailer park."

"I'll take my chances. Tell me, what does Hosanna mean in Hebrew? Every Easter we recall the ancient shouts of 'HOSANNA, HOSANNA!' as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, but what does the word mean?"

"Well, the short answer is it means, 'Save, please!' or colloquially, 'Save us, now!' or, 'Please, save us!'"

"I understand that. Preachers always say that. But save us from WHAT? What did the people mean?"

"Good question. I think most of us assume the people meant 'Save us from our sins,' since our Christian theology focuses on the cross and resurrection for our salvation."

"Yes, but is that what the WORD refers to?"

"Probably not in that context, no. The Jews desperately longed to be delivered from brutal Roman occupation. Moses had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. Cyrus set Israel free from Babylonian exile. The Maccabees led a successful rebellion of Israel against Greek Seleucids bringing about Jewish Independence. Who would free Israel from Rome? The people longed for deliverance. So, in this context Hosanna means 'Save us from Roman domination!'"

"Okay, that makes sense. So, they weren't thinking about their sins?"

"They were thinking about Rome's sins. The Romans were brutal occupiers. And the Feast flooding Jerusalem with pilgrims that week was The Passover, which celebrated Israel's liberation from Egypt under Moses. The townsfolk are pleading, 'Do it again, please! Do it again!'"

"So, why didn't Jesus do it, then? Wasn't he sorta like a Second Moses?"

"Yes, he was, and he took pains to show it. Only he wasn't interested in leading a physical liberation as Moses had. Jesus's interest was spiritual. He understood the greater enemy of the people was not Rome, but sin. Conquerors come and go, but sin is ubiquitous and oppressive. The freedom Jesus sought to bring was liberation from sin."

"And the people missed it?"

"Seems so, for the most part, anyway. His riding a donkey into Jerusalem rather than a white steed common to conquerors privileges a differ-



art by Rene Boldt

ent type of power than military. Healing the sick, teaching and incarnating love, peace and forgiveness, washing the feet of his disciples, cleansing the Temple, suffering and dying on the cross, and forgiving from the cross all help to define and model the mission of Jesus."

"So, ironically, the HOSANNA the people longed for came to pass after all, not in the old kingdom as they had wished, but for anyone who came to understand and follow Jesus into a new kingdom on earth?"

"Couldn't have said it better myself."

"Maybe we could just say there's something better than finding Easter eggs this week."

"I like that."

"One last question."

"Okay."

"Based on what you have said are Christians today missing the boat focusing on politics, political parties, and government, rather than spiritual things?"

"Another good question. I'm not sure one size fits all. Who am I to judge anyone's spiritual focus, but I would imagine many people believe they are battling for the things of God. Unfortunately, how-

ever, belief and behavior contrary to the life and teachings of Christ often characterize many Christians, Christian organizations, churches and leaders, causing great damage to the cause of Christ in my view. Since Jesus focused on the life of the spirit, we Christians might ask ourselves, 'WHAT would JESUS THINK, SAY, DO, EXPECT?' then live accordingly."

"Maybe one more question, if I may? May I, mind if I meddle?"

"Haha, sure, go ahead."

"Okay, if you were grading yourself on correct Christian living, on a scale of 1-10, based on everything you've said, what score would you give yourself?"

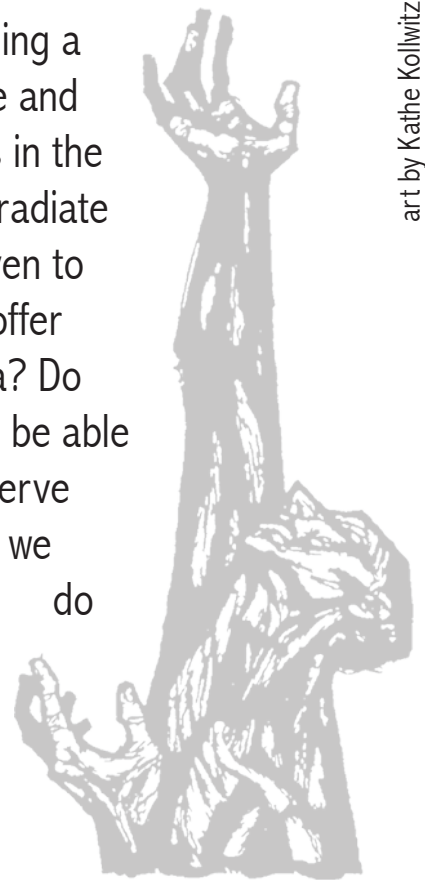
"F."

—Randall O'Brien studied at Mississippi College in Clinton, MS; Yale University in New Haven, CT; Harvard University in Cambridge, MA, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He taught religion at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, AR, and Baylor University in Waco, TX, before becoming provost at Baylor and then president at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, TN. In retirement, he continues to preach, write and find ways to be creative.

We no longer have to ask ourselves if we are approaching a state of emergency. We are in the midst of it, right here and now, and we expect the future to mirror the past.... It is in the midst of this dark world that we are invited to live and radiate hope. Is it possible? Can we become light, salt and leaven to our brothers and sisters in the human family? Can we offer hope, courage and confidence to the people of this era? Do we dare break through our paralyzing fear? Will people be able to say of us, 'See how they love each other, how they serve their neighbor, and how they pray to their Lord?' Or do we have to confess that at this juncture of history we just do not have the needed strength or the generosity? How can we live in hope so as to give hope?

And how do we find true joy?

—Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome*



art by Kathe Kollwitz

A Liturgy for Maundy Thursday

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

One: The journey has been long, our feet are sore, tired, and dirty with the travel,

Many: And yet Jesus washes our feet, relieving our pains, and goes to prepare a place for us at the table.

One: For there are many who are also sore, tired, and dirty from life's journey, hoping there's a spot for them as well,

Many: And so we wash one another's feet, that all of those that we meet along the way may know that they are God's beloved too.

One: And we pull up another chair, for the table of grace has been set.

Many: May our hearts reflect our humble host, and point us towards exemplifying justice.

–Alec Ylitalo

Meditation of Preparation

The grass never sleeps.

Or the roses.

Nor does the lily have a secret eye that shuts until morning.

Jesus said, wait with me.

But the disciples slept.

The cricket has such splendid fringe on its feet, and it sings,

have you noticed, with its whole body, and heaven knows if it ever sleeps.

Jesus said, wait with me.

And maybe the stars did,

maybe the wind wound itself into a

silver tree, and didn't move,

maybe the lake far away, where once

he walked

as on a blue pavement,

lay still and waited, wide awake.

Oh the dear bodies, slumped and eye-shut,

that could not keep that vigil,

how they must have wept, so utterly

human, knowing this too must be part of the story.

–Mary Oliver, "Gethsemane"

Hymn

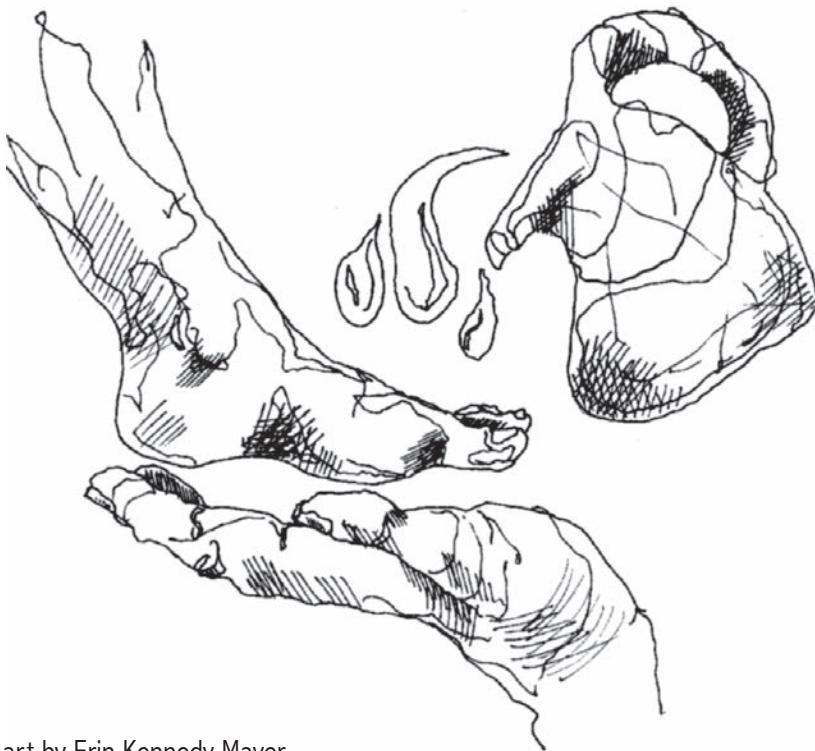
What Meekness and What Majesty

Words: Terry W. York

Music: Ralph Manuel

MEEKNESS 8.8.8.6.

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 170



art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 166:1-2, 12-19

Hymn

“Un Mandamiento Nuevo/
Jesus a New Commandment Has Given Us”

Words & Music: William Loperena,
adapt. Carolyn Jennings,

arr. Luis Olinieri & Roberto Milano

LOPERENA 8.8. with Refrain

The New Century Hymnal No. 389

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Gospel Reading

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Footwashing Ceremony

Here you could have three (or more) stations, each set up with a footwashing bowl, a pitcher of warm water and plenty of towels. Perhaps you could ask ministers or deacons to be at the stations to do the washing. Then you could invite anyone in the congregation to come and participate. Another way to do it would be to set up one station and ask two people to wash each other's feet as a symbolic gesture.

Invitation to the Table/Communion

Hymn

“Sólo Tú Eres Santo / You Alone Are Holy”

Words & Music: Anonymous, Jorge Lockward,
adapt. Kenneth R. Hanna, tr. Raquel Mora

Martínez

QUERÉTARO 12.12.12.13.

Hymnal: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2077

Meditation of Commitment

Over and over again
we sit in our courtyards,
our mouths speaking what our hearts are full of...

WE DO NOT KNOW HIM

DONOTDONOTDONOT

KNOWHIMKNOWHIMKNOWHIM

echoes loudly

emphatically

filling time and space

heaven and earth;

and yet

the saddest part

is when the cock crows

we don't have the ears to hear

TOHEARTOHEARTOHEAR.

At least Peter had the ears to hear

and the heart to weep.

–Ann Weems, “The Courtyard Scene”

Hymn of Commitment

“Now Quit Your Care and

Anxious Fear and Worry”

Words: Percy Dearmer

Music: French Carol, harm. Martin Fallas Shaw

QUITTEZ, PASTEURS Irregular Meter

The Hymnal 1982 No. 145

Benediction

Lord, we long for righteousness within and without. We pray for the church we love to be the church as it's meant to be. Hear our prayer. Empower us with vision and courage. Redeem us, your body, from that which tears us asunder, ripping the fabric of your flesh and blood over and over, in nonsacramental ways. Bring healing, help and hope as only you can, Lord Jesus. It begins within me now, and within each of my brothers and sisters. Thank you for working your work, and remake the church. Amen.

–David Delacroix,

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans



art by Helen Siegl



A Liturgy for Holy Friday

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

art courtesy of the Franciscanos Cruz Blanco

Call to Worship

One: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Many: We echo Jesus' words; we feel them too.

One: His pain is our pain, his suffering is our suffering, his death is our death,

Many: And yet we're the ones yelling, "Crucify him," we're the ones holding the nails.

One: Christ gives himself up for the healing of the world,

Many: May our hearts understand that sacrifice, and turn towards justice to continue the healing that Jesus began.

Meditation of Preparation

Grotesquerie against the fading sky,
Dark icon of the cosmic grief with which creation shudders

This black day—
Blacker than the gloom that falls like stone
Upon the stony hills. Blacker than the hearts of we
Who do the deed,
Than the evil of the world that smiles this day
Its bleak, Satanic smile—
Blacker, more malignant than easeful death!
I will not call you good!

Not yet!

—C. W. Christian

Hymn

"Kyrie"

Words: Ancient Greek

Music: Antonín Dvorak,
att. Ruth Elaine Schram

NEW WORLD Irregular

Hymnal: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2275

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 22

Hymn

"My Song Is Love Unknown"

Words: Samuel Crossman

Music: John D. Edwards

RHOSYMEDRE 6.6.6.6.8.8.8.

The New Century Hymnal No. 222

Epistle Reading

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Gospel Reading

John 18:1-19:42

Tenebrae

See "Tenebrae: A Service of Shadows" on page 28.

Please see "Holy Friday" on page 29.

Tenebrae:

A Service of Shadows

by Sharlande Sledge

During Holy Week a few weeks before I left my seminary church for my first job in full-time ministry, I experienced a service whose mystery surfaces in my soul every year during the weekend before Easter. In the deepest dark of the church's window-less chapel, without as much as a sliver of light and only my hands on the pew to guide me, my first Tenebrae Service on Holy Saturday seemed to transport me back to medieval times.

In all the Holy Weeks since then, the word "Tenebrae" has been incorporated into my current church's Good Friday Service, but I have always wondered whether it was traditionally meant to be a separate service.

I decided to take a step back to see what church history says. "Tenebrae" is the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows." One church historian writes, "Tenebrae is a prolonged meditation on Christ's suffering." For centuries, the word was applied to all the ancient monastic nighttime and early morning services of the last three days of Holy Week. When the common people adopted the Tenebrae liturgy, they most often observed it with a service on Good Friday evening, or even after communion on Maundy Thursday.

Quite simply, Tenebrae is a service of light and darkness, based on the last words of Jesus from the Cross. The scripture may be divided into seven, eight, or nine readings. Readers may go up one at a time, read the assigned scripture and extinguish a candle, until only one candle remains. As the candles are extinguished one at a time, the people in the community keep silence to help them experience the story more intensely, see our brokenness reflected in Jesus Christ, who carries the sorrows of the world. Here are the readings from Matthew:

- The Shadow of Betrayal—*Matthew 26:20-25*

- The Shadow of the Agony of the Spirit and Arrest—*Matthew 26:36-50*
- The Shadow of Denial—*Matthew 26:69-75*
- The Shadow of Crucifixion and Humiliation—*Matthew 27:31-43*
- The Shadow of Death—*Matthew 27:45-54*
- The Shadow of Burial—*Matthew 27:57-60*

As the words are spoken, passage by passage, the sanctuary or other worship space slowly grows from dimly lit to pitch dark by the extinguishing of candles and other lights in the space. Most churches today, like the medieval communities, leave the light shining on only a single candle, the highest of all the candles: the Christ candle.

In medieval tradition, toward the end of the service this lighted candle is hidden, typifying the apparent victory of the forces of evil. At the very end of the readings, the "strepitus" interrupts the service. The strepitus is a loud noise, peculiar to the Tenebrae service, that symbolizes the earthquake that happened after Jesus' death.

The word "strepitus" is Latin for "great noise" made by slamming a book, banging a hymnal against a pew or stomping on the floor. The noise is meant to be shocking and moving, and it is intended to help the congregation understand the significance of what is happening. The custom may have originated as a signal to depart, or it may represent the confusion and shock the disciples felt after Jesus' death. The strepitus is not commonly part of the Protestant tradition.

At that point the hidden candle is restored to its place, and by its light, someone reads the first part of Psalm 22:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me,



art courtesy of the Franciscanos Cruz Blanco

*from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.*

In a Tenebrae Service, there is no benediction, and people leave in silence. The lights stay very dim, giving just enough light so that people can see their way out. The purpose of the service is to recreate the betrayal, abandonment and agony of events, and it is left unfinished because the story isn't over until Easter Day.

In his book *The Transforming Power of Prayer: From Illusion to Reality*, Michael Marshall cites George Tyrell, SJ, meditating upon his approaching death:

As at Tenebræ, one after another the lights are extinguished, till one alone—and that the highest of all—is left, so it is often with the soul and her guiding stars. In our early days there are many—parents, teachers, friends, books, authorities—but, as life goes on, one by one they fail and leave us in deepening darkness, with the increasing sense of the mystery and inexplicability of all things, till at last none but the figure of Christ stands out luminous against the prevailing night.

—Sharlande Sledge, the newest member of the Seeds liturgical team, recently retired after serving for many years as associate pastor for Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX. She served as the writer in residence for a year after retiring as associate pastor. Now she is pursuing other writing adventures.

Prayer for Tenebrae

by Thomas Turner

Holy God,
We are caught in the tension of
light and shadow, death and resurrection.
You spoke the world into being,
you illuminated the universe by your very speech,
then filled the void with life.
Indeed, you have filled the void
of darkness and death,
the empty promises of the abyss,
with new life and new creation.
We look to you in the space between the world and
the Kingdom,
longing for the fulfillment of your word
in the work of the Holy Spirit
and the reign of Christ, our Creator and King.
Amen

Holy Friday, continued from page 27

Meditation of Commitment

Am I a stone and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop
Thy blood's slow loss And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in the starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon
—I, only I.

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more,
And smite a rock.

—Christina Rosetti, "Good Friday"

Hymn of Commitment

"O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus"

Words: Samuel Trevor Francis

Music: Thomas J. Williams

EBENEZER 8.7.8.7.D.

Celebrating Grace Hymnal

Benediction

The way is before us as it was for you—when you dragged your cross up to Golgotha, thorns piercing your head and the spit of those taunting you still on your face. The way is before us, perhaps not with cross and nails, for our suffering will be different in nature and form. But our way is united with yours in purpose if we allow ourselves to suffer for others. If we open our hearts to feel the pain of the world, perhaps healing for all of us can continue...in your name...as we follow your way. Amen.

—Erin Conaway

Leave in Silence



A Liturgy for Easter Sunday

by the Sacred Seasons Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

One: The stone is rolled away, the tomb is empty, light pierces the shadows.

Many: *Oh death, where is your sting?*

One: If God can overcome the law of sin and death, then God can meet us in all of our sufferings,

Many: *And guide us beyond the crosses that we bear into the light of Christ that reveals the resurrection.*

One: There is hope for us and for the world, but that hope shouldn't just be here at the tomb,

Many: *May our hearts be renewed with new light and life, and inspire us to continue the action of the resurrection daily, with an eye toward justice for all.*

-Alec Ylitalo

Meditation of Preparation

From the true Light there arises for us the light which illumines our darkened eyes.

His glory shines upon the world and enlightens the very depths of the abyss. Death is annihilated, night has vanished, and the gates of Sheol are broken.

Creatures lying in darkness from ancient times are clothed in light.

-English translation of one verse from *The Coming Light*:

Hymns of St. Ephrem the Syrian, 4th century CE

Hymn

"Jesus Lives, and So Shall I"

Words: Christian F. Gellert, tr. Philip Schaff

Music: Johann Crüger

ZUVERSICHT 7.8.7.8.7.7.

The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration No. 224

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 65:17-25

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Hymn

"Celtic Alleluia"

Words and Music: Fintan O'Carroll & Christopher Walker

Hymnal: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 148

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Please see "Easter Sunday" on page 32.



The Witness of Thomas the Twin

by Crystal Goolsby

Editor's note: The monologues below are from the Seeds publication With Our Own Eyes, a group of seven monologues based on the resurrection appearances of Jesus depicted in the gospels. These are often used together with the monologues from the Easter Walk (see page 19). These two monologues are usually set so that the children (or other viewers) visit Thomas' room for the first one, move to a different scene, and then come back to Thomas' scene for the second. We encourage you to arrange it or stage it to suit your needs.

Thomas the Twin, Scene 1

Scripture: John 20:19-25, Luke 24:36-43

Setting: Outside, in Jerusalem. Evening, first-century Palestine. You could use a painted backdrop that

suggests a Jerusalem street or an olive grove. Thomas is dressed in modest clothing.

I can't believe all that has happened in the last few days. We thought Jesus was the Messiah we had

But I don't believe it. Once a man is dead, he is dead. I won't believe it until I see him for myself, and can put my fingers into his wounds.

all been waiting for, but he died without delivering us! Who will help us now?

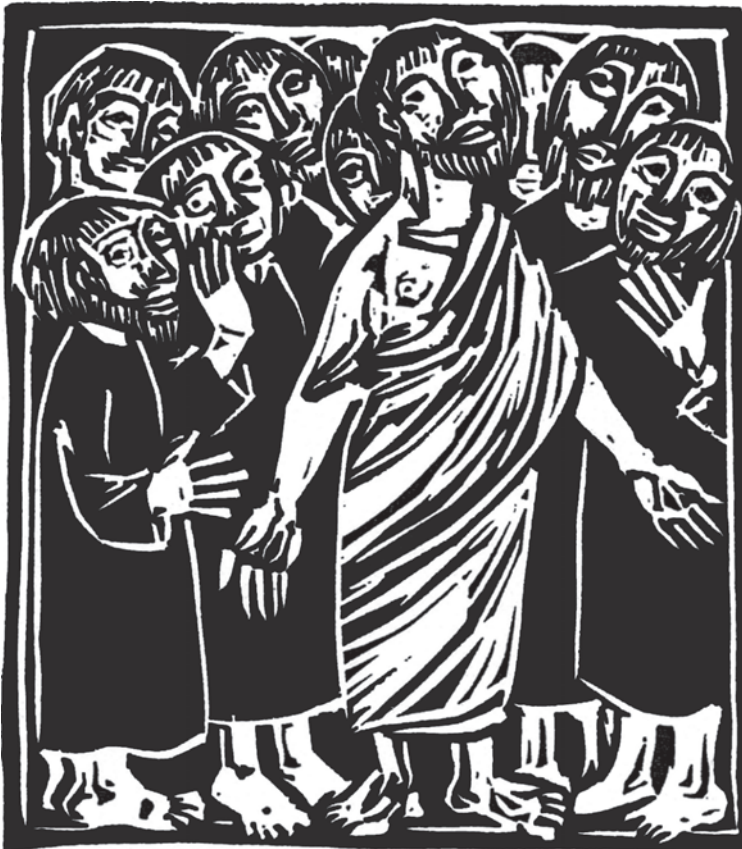
Three days ago, Jesus of Nazareth was put on the cross and he died. He was put in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. My friends, who, along with me, make up a group of his followers, came running to me just now, saying that they saw him, alive. Impossible! They insist that it is true, but I don't believe it.

They told me that they were hiding in the upper room of a house, in a group, talking, when a man suddenly appeared in the room and said, "Peace be with you." The room was locked, because they were afraid they would be arrested, too, and this man just appeared inside the room!

As you can imagine, they were shocked and horrified! They thought it was a ghost. But then he showed them the wounds he got when he was crucified—holes in his hands and feet, as well as a wound in his side from a spear.

They said they were still not sure he was a real human being. But he asked for some food. They gave him a piece of fish from their supper, and he ate it while they watched. It was then that they knew he was

Please see "Thomas the Twin" on page 32.



art by Helen Siegl

Easter Sunday,

continued from page 30

Gospel Reading

John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

Meditation of Commitment

The joyful news that He is risen does not change the contemporary world. Still before us lie work, discipline, sacrifice. But the fact of Easter gives us the spiritual power to do the work, accept the discipline, and make the sacrifice.

—Henry Knox Sherrill

Hymn of Commitment

“I Know that My Redeemer Liveth”

Words: Jessie Brown Pounds

Music: James H. Fillmore

HANNAH 9.8.9.8. with Refrain

Chalice Hymnal No. 225

Benediction

God,

you are our beginning

and you will be our end;

we are made in your image

and likeness.

We praise and thank you for this day.

This is the day on which

you created light

and saw it was good.

This is the day in whose

early morning light

we discovered the tomb was empty,

and encountered Christ,

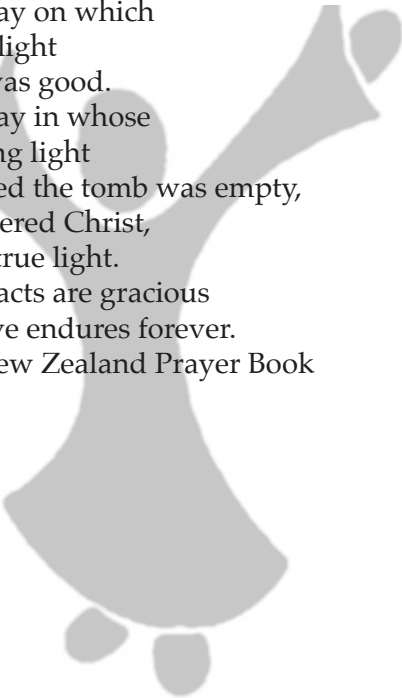
the world’s true light.

For us your acts are gracious

and your love endures forever.

—from the New Zealand Prayer Book

art by Rebecca S. Ward



Thomas the Twin,

continued from page 31

really alive, and they came running to tell me.

But I don’t believe it. Once a man is dead, he is dead. I won’t believe it until I see him for myself, and can put my fingers into his wounds.

Thomas the Twin, Scene 2

Scripture: John 20:26-29

Setting: A week after the first appearance to the disciples when Thomas was absent. An interior room with a long rustic table, set as though a simple meal has just been concluded. It is evening. The room should be darkened, with lamplight or candlelight. Thomas is dressed in the clothing of a person of modest means in first-century Palestine.

I have a confession to make to all of you. I am the one who told you I didn’t believe any of these stories about Jesus being risen from the dead. This is the place that the others saw Jesus a week ago. They were here again tonight, but I was with them this time.

And what do you think happened? A man suddenly appeared in the room, like they described, and it looked just like the Master! But, I said to myself, it can’t possibly be true.

The man said, “Peace be with you,” to the whole group. Then he turned to me and said, “Thomas. Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” So I did what he told me. I actually put my fingers into his wounds and felt that it was real flesh! I was astounded. I exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus was happy that I now believed that he was alive, after I saw and touched him, but still he told me, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

If only I had believed it was really he when my friends told me they saw him. I am ashamed that faith was not enough for me, but I am happy that he showed himself to me. And I know he loves me. I will never doubt him again.

—Crystal Goolsby, at this writing, was a Baylor University English major from Austin, Texas. For a complete copy of *With Our Own Eyes*, email seedseditor1@gmail.com or go to www.seedspublishers.org/worship.

Benediction



*May the Lord bless you
and keep you.*

May the Lord shine the divine
countenance upon you.

May the Lord give you peace,
but may that peace be a disturbing peace,
A peace that calls you to long for the peace of
all humankind.

May you find in the blessing of God,
The blessing of sharing in the service of God
And bearing the cross of Christ.

As you go forth from this place,
Go forth in the power of the spirit of God
To make a difference in the world.

—*Raymond Bailey*

art by Rebecca S. Ward