



dangerous love

Creative Resources for Lent and Eastertide

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Sacred Seasons:

Creative Worship Tools for Your Church

These unique worship resource packets are available for the liturgical year, four packets a year for \$150 (\$165 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$60 (\$75 outside of the US).

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Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek 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 poverty.

Editorial Address

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Dangerous Love

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a word about this packet

The cover art for this packet is by Matthew Rosencrans, the minister to students at Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds ministry is housed. Almost all of the other art here is from Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca. The sermons are from Lanny Peters of Decatur, Georgia, and Ken Sehested of Asheville, North Carolina. You will find several poems from Deborah Lynn of Nashville, Tennessee, as well as litanies and benedictions from April Baker and Amy Mears, also of Nashville. Also featured are Sharon Rollins's nested meditations and poems by Heather Herschap. We have included a monologue from *Easter Walk*, the Seeds drama for children.

For other Ash Wednesday services, or for Tenebrae or Maundy Thursday services, or Lenten activities for youth, please refer to earlier *Sacred Seasons* packets. We hope you will be inspired and enriched by these contents.

As always, the material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely. We have tried to pull together creative and inspiring resources that you can use to raise awareness of issues surrounding economic justice and food security (especially from a biblical perspective) in your congregation. We endeavored to choose a variety of age groups, worship areas, events, and angles, so that you would have a potpourri of art and ideas from which to choose.

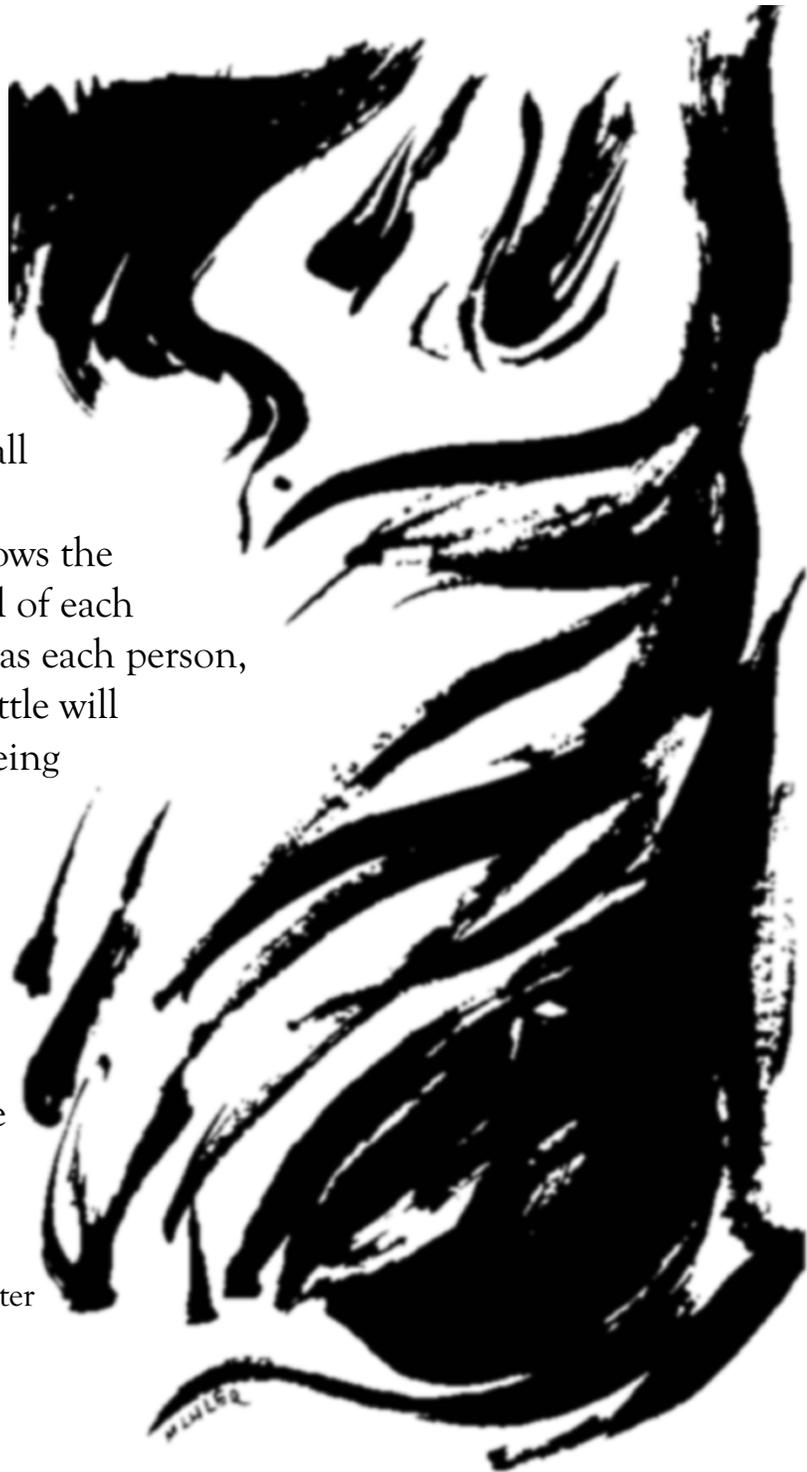
We make a conscious effort to maintain a balance between the apostolic and the contemplative—on the one hand, the dynamic challenge to stay true to God's mandate to feed the poor and struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams. May it be so.

Gratefully, The Staff and Council of Stewards

Bulletin art

I believe that
at the center
of the
universe
there dwells
a loving
spirit who
longs for all
that's best in all
of creation, a
spirit who knows the
great potential of each
planet as well as each person,
and little by little will
love us into being
more than we
ever dreamed
possible. That
loving spirit
would rather
die than give
up on any one
of us.

—Fred Rogers,
Life's Journeys
According to Mister
Rogers. *Art by*
Hermano León of
the Franciscanos
de la Cruzblanca.



Lenten Thoughts

by Sean Sutcliffe and Katie Cook

During Lent it is common for Christians to give up something, generally a bad habit or a luxury. My Catholic friends usually give up meat on Friday (which makes going out to eat a challenge). But allow me to propose something: instead of giving up a habit for Lent, let us adopt (or re-adopt) one, not just for 40 days, but 365 days a year.

Let us dedicate ourselves to being Christ-like every day of the year. Let us strive everyday to show the love, mercy, and kindness of Christ to someone in whatever ways we can—by listening to someone, talking with someone, contributing financially to a cause that makes a difference in people’s lives, or by volunteering our time.

Let us reject the perversion of Christianity that is being spread today and reject the gospel of

commercialism (“God wants you to have lots of material possessions”), self-satisfaction (“Believe in God and you will get the perfect parking place), and hypocrisy (“Donate to me and receive miracle spring water or a prayer cloth that will heal whatever ails you”). Let us actively pursue a life of service, even in the simplest form, to our brothers and sisters, at home, on the streets, at work, wherever.

I realize I have not said anything about Lent, Easter, or the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But what better way to celebrate the life of Jesus than by imitating it? What better way to remember the sacrifice that Christ made for us than to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God in the service of others?

—Sean Sutcliffe is a reference librarian in Waco, Texas. Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.



I don’t know about you, but I think I’ve been skirting around the real issues of Lent. I think I’ve been copping out lately, trying to end up at the empty tomb without going through the journey that would really get me there.

But I’m not thinking about wallowing in the minutiae of Jesus’ suffering, and the paralyzing guilt that comes with that. I’m thinking about those things that got Jesus in trouble—the revolutionary teachings, the digs at the religious elite, the trashing of the vendor tables at the Temple.

I’m thinking that, if I were following him like I say I am, I would be in more trouble. Father Ray, a

character on *Nothing Sacred*, an ABC drama from years ago, told one of his colleagues, “I’m supposed to be like Christ. I’m 33 years old. If I were doing my job, I’d be dead.” There’s some truth in that.

I’m thinking about the kind of love that makes you say, like Isaiah, “Here I am. I’ll do it.” The kind of love that can get you strung up like a thief.

Each year, our Sunday school class (10th, 11th, and 12th grades) chooses, with Donna Kennedy and me, a Lenten discipline to observe together. In recent years, I’ve caught myself hoping that the students won’t pick one that’s too strenuous.

For my personal discipline, I sometimes choose something challenging. Some years I give myself some grace. Some years I try something new and creative. Every year I try to give up an attitude that has been particularly tenacious. But I’m not sure that’s all I need to do.

I don’t know about you, but I do need the Lenten disciplines. I need the ashes on my forehead to help me begin them. But mostly I need to respond more fully to the love I receive from God. I need to keep saying, “Here I am.” And I need to be ready for the consequences.

—Katie Cook is the editor for *Seeds of Hope Publishers*.

Lectionary Readings for Lent and Easter

Sundays

First Sunday in Lent

Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13

Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 13:31-35

Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 3:1-15
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Joshua 5:9-12
Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm 126
Philippians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8

Palm Sunday

Liturgy of the Palms:

Luke 19:28-40
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Liturgy of the Word:

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 22:14-23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

Easter Morning

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
or Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

Easter Evening

Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 114
1 Corinthians 5:6b-8
Luke 24:13-49

Holy Week

Monday in Holy Week

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 36:5-11
Hebrews 9:11-15
John 12:1-11

Tuesday in Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 71:1-14
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
John 12:20-36

Wednesday in Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 70
Hebrews 12:1-3
John 13:21-32

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 10-17
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25 or
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42

Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14
or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24
Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16
1 Peter 4:1-8
Matthew 27:57-66
or John 19:38-42

Easter Vigil

Hebrew Scriptures:
Genesis 1:1-2:4a
and Psalm 136; 1-9, 23-26
Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13
and Psalm 46
Genesis 22:1-18
and Psalm 16
Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21
and Canticle 8
Isaiah 55:1-11
and Canticle 9
Baruch 3:9-15; 3:32-4:4
or Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6
and Psalm 19
Ezekiel 36:24-28
and Psalm 42 and 43
Ezekiel 37:1-14
and Psalm 143
Zephaniah 3:14-20
and Psalm 98
New Testament Scriptures:
Romans 6:3-11
Psalm 114
Luke 24:1-12



Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

Preparing for Lent

An Ash Wednesday Meditation

by Lanny Peters

Scripture Texts: Psalm 51, John

Back in early December, the season of Advent began with an angel announcing the arrival of two babies, one to an old couple and the other to a young girl. The young girl, Mary, said yes to being God's co-creator in an amazing new way.

As we observed during the joyous Christmas season, the old prophet Simeon struck an ominous note when Jesus' parents brought him for his dedication in the Temple. Simeon declared, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed," and to the parents he said, "a sword will pierce your own soul." (Luke 2: 34)

The season of Epiphany began with the Wise Men adoring the newborn child and Mary pondering in her heart all that was happening to her. The season of Lent begins in a completely different way. Instead of contemplating and pondering birth, we are asked to contemplate and ponder death. At the end of this service, we will have ashes placed on our forehead and hear the words spoken, "Dust you are, and to dust you will be returned."

These words come from an ancient text in the book of Genesis (3:19) and are intended to remind us of our mortality. The reason for this is not to be morbid, but to invite us into a season of reflection and spiritual discipline intended to help us reprioritize our lives and focus on that which is essential.

When we are faced with death, those things that are not vital fall away and reveal what is most important.

I have seen this time and time again. I saw it when my father-in-law was dying. He



was a very loving man, but had often been quite rigid around his political and religious beliefs, so that his family would often avoid certain topics around him. After he got sick, most of that rigidity melted away. There was an openness to everyone as he realized what was most important was being loving to one another.

This can be true even when someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly. I was aware of this recently in preparing a memorial service for one of our members. Judi had gone home from work two weeks before, with no signs of feeling bad, and then died suddenly of a massive heart attack.

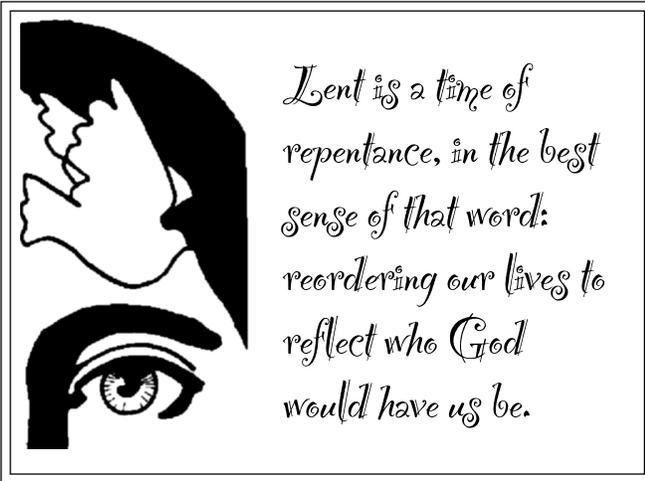
She was not totally unprepared, however; she had carefully planned what she wanted in her service. Her friend, the Native American holy man John Winterhawk, recalled words Judi had spoken in a ceremony a few weeks before. Looking back, it seemed that Judi realized that she might be passing over soon. Judi left us having lived a full and complete life. Her service brought together an incredible array of people of every kind, a glimpse of the kingdom of God in our midst.

Just a few days before, we had sat around a table at the deacons' meeting, with no idea that one of us would be dead by week's end. Lent is a time of taking stock of our lives, as a way of preparing for death, for no one knows when their time may come. Lent is a time of repentance, in the best sense of that word: reordering our lives to reflect who God would have us be.

Part of that is corporate. Today we began our service with a trumpet calling us together as a community to reorder our common life. We live in a time where security and defense have become an

obsession and an idol in our country, pushing all other priorities out of the way, even into obscurity.

Another part of Lent is deeply personal, asking each of us to examine our individual lives, just as the one who wrote Psalm 51 many years ago honestly did. We also are challenged to see the connection between the communal and the personal.



All of this does not have to be somber. Jesus, at times, poked fun at his listeners. He wanted us to laugh at the masks we wear to fool one another, and even to try to fool God.

During Lent, and especially during Holy Week, we look at the way Jesus died to see what we can learn about living. The Gospel of John tells us a story about a conversation Jesus has with his mother while he is dying. The last story prior to this, about Jesus and Mary recorded in John's gospel, occurred about three years earlier. They were together at a wedding in Cana. She asked him to use his special powers to deal with a shortage of wine so that her friend, the host, would not be embarrassed.

"Woman," he had said back then, "what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." I am not sure what tone Jesus used, but it did not seem to bother Mary in the least. She ignored him and called the servants over. Jesus said something like "Aw, Maw," and then did as she had asked. He changed the water into wine so the party could go on.

Now, in today's passage, as Jesus hung on the cross, his time had come, though it had come in a way his mother could not have imagined. Fortunately, she was not alone. Her sister was there, along with Mary Magdalene and another friend named Mary.

Another man was there whom the gospel writer does not name, but calls the Beloved Disciple. The only thing we know about this person is that he was dear to Jesus, perhaps having to do with the fact that he was the only male disciple who did not run and hide when Jesus was

arrested. The women were not in nearly as much danger as he was. They were far less likely to be stopped and questioned as collaborators.

There has been a lot of focus during recent years on how horrible the crucifixion was, with movies like Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and other passion plays. However you feel about that, most of us agree that Jesus died in a violent, horrible, dehumanizing way.

The first words he spoke from the cross, recorded by John, were, "Woman, here is your son." It was a terrible fulfillment of the words of old Simeon, for it was indeed like a sword that pierced Mary's own soul. Then he looked at the Beloved Disciple and said to him, "Here is your mother."

Barbara Brown Taylor says:

Since his hands are not free, he has to do a lot of work with his eyes, indicating which woman and which man. When he is through, the adoption is final. From that hour, John says, the Beloved Disciple took Jesus' mother into his own home. It is a gesture of surprising sweetness, and yet you have to wonder which way it went. Was Jesus looking out for his mother or his disciple? Who needed whom more? ...It was merciful of Jesus to give her a new son. But it is also merciful of to give that son a new mother, especially this one....

When the beloved disciple takes her home, and when the other disciples come crawling out from under their rocks, they will find themselves in the presence of someone whose contact with the Holy Spirit has been far more intimate than theirs. She has seen things they have only heard about. She has felt things inside her own body they cannot even imagine. Perhaps that is why she stayed put while they fled. Perhaps that is what let her look full into the ruined face that no one but her (and her new son) could bear to see. While the principalities and powers believe they are tearing his family apart, Jesus is quietly putting it together again: this mother with this son, this past with this future. Although his enemies will succeed in killing him, he will leave no orphans behind. At the foot of the cross, the mother of the old becomes the mother of the new. The beloved disciple becomes the new beloved son. (Home Another Way, Cowley Publications, 1999, p. 99.)

There will be much more to ponder in the weeks ahead as we look at the lectionary stories of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. We will see that Jesus died in a way that was consistent with how he lived. We see that in today's text. Even in the midst of being crucified, he was concerned with those he was leaving behind. Even from the cross, he was still about creating the beloved community of God.

I would like to lead us now in a time of meditation in which we might reflect on what is most important to us as

a way of preparing for the journey of Lent. I invite you to get comfortable in whatever way you can. Close your eyes if that helps you focus. Take a few long deep breaths.

*When we are faced
with death, those
things that are not vital
fall away and reveal
what is most important.*



Listen to this poem by Linda Pastan, called "The Almanac of Last Things."

*From the almanac of last things
I choose the spider lily
for the grace of its brief
blossom, though I myself
fear brevity,*

*but I choose The Song of Songs
because the flesh
of those pomegranates
has survived
all the frost of dogma.*

*I choose January with its chill
lessons of patience and despair—and
August, too sun-struck for lessons.
I choose a thimbleful of red wine
to make my heart race,*

*then another to help me
sleep. From the almanac
of last things I choose you,
as I have done before.
And I choose evening*

*because the light clinging
to the window
is at its most reflective
just as it is ready
to go out.*

Take some time to reflect on some of the things you would list as your almanac of last things. What do you value most? What do you most love?

(Silent reflection and Prayer)

If you knew you only had a limited time to live, how would you spend it?

(Silent reflection and Prayer)

What would you like to ask God to help you change this Lenten season, so that the way you live better reflects God's priorities? What disciplines and graces will help you do this?

(Silent reflection and Prayer)

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, an ancient sign, that speaks of the frailty and the uncertainty of human life. It is also a sign of repentance. Those who wish to do so are invited to come forward and receive the sign of ashes. But tonight we are also reminded that we are not without hope. By the grace of God through the love of Christ, we are given everlasting life. Though our bodies will return to dust, the essence of who we are will return to God. So I invite each of you to respond silently or out loud after receiving the ashes by saying, "Blessed is our God."

—Lanny Peters is pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia. During the Lenten season in which he presented this meditation, he supplemented the lectionary texts with a series based on the seven last words of Jesus from the cross.

—Art for pages 6-8 is by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.



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 and Amy Mears

Voices in the Desert

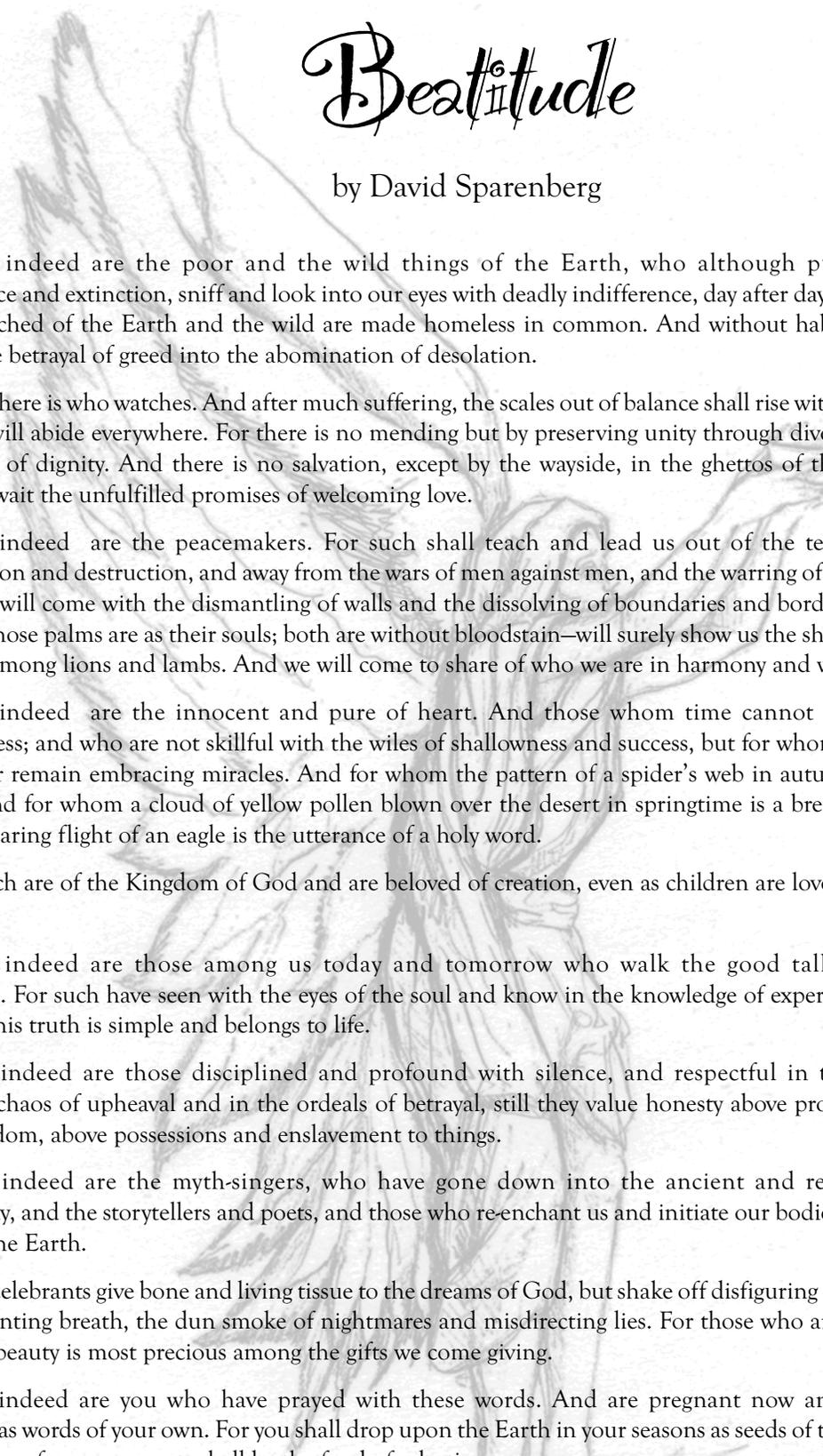
a reading for youth and others

for the first Sunday in Lent

by April Baker

FIRST READER: A voice called out in the desert,
SECOND READER: "Prepare the way of the Lord...and all will see the salvation of God."
FIRST READER: But then, in the heat and sand of the desert, came another voice:
THIRD READER: "If you are hungry, turn these stones to bread."
SECOND READER: "Give homage to me, and all power and majesty will be yours."
THIRD READER: "Throw yourself from this high place and prove your faith."
FIRST READER: O God, in these weeks, a cross looms ahead, and we do not want to prepare the way toward it.
SECOND READER: We find it easier to reach for a stone and give in to the moment's desire.
THIRD READER: Our knees quiver, perilously close to bending to whatever voice offers an escape.
SECOND READER: We find ourselves leaning toward the edge of the spectacular and away from the edge of the faithful.
FIRST READER: The love you demand is too dangerous.
SECOND READER: We may not be able to prepare for such love, but, God, O God, help us to fall into it.
FIRST READER: Stay with us when we stumble on the path,
THIRD READER: Trying to stay within earshot of the voice that calls us to love,
SECOND READER: Passionately,
THIRD READER: Abundantly,
SECOND READER: Recklessly,
THIRD READER; Dangerously.
FIRST READER: That we too might find our salvation.
(based on Luke 4:1-11)

—April Baker is co-pastor of Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.
Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.



Beatitude

by David Sparenberg

Blessed indeed are the poor and the wild things of the Earth, who although pushed to the edge of existence and extinction, sniff and look into our eyes with deadly indifference, day after day and minute by minute. For the wretched of the Earth and the wild are made homeless in common. And without habitation, multitudes are driven by the betrayal of greed into the abomination of desolation.

Yet One there is who watches. And after much suffering, the scales out of balance shall rise with a mighty ringing. And justice will abide everywhere. For there is no mending but by preserving unity through diversity; no healing but in the bestowal of dignity. And there is no salvation, except by the wayside, in the ghettos of the forgotten, where the vulnerable await the unfulfilled promises of welcoming love.

Blessed indeed are the peacemakers. For such shall teach and lead us out of the terror and confusion of deception and destruction, and away from the wars of men against men, and the warring of men on nature. But the day of peace will come with the dismantling of walls and the dissolving of boundaries and borders. And the gentle and visionary—whose palms are as their souls; both are without bloodstain—will surely show us the shade of a life-bearing tree and seat us among lions and lambs. And we will come to share of who we are in harmony and without hatred.

Blessed indeed are the innocent and pure of heart. And those whom time cannot stoop and wither into bitterness; and who are not skillful with the wiles of shallowness and success, but for whom both prairie stars and daybreak star remain embracing miracles. And for whom the pattern of a spider's web in autumn garden is a form of scripture. And for whom a cloud of yellow pollen blown over the desert in springtime is a breath of mystery. And for whom the soaring flight of an eagle is the utterance of a holy word.

For all such are of the Kingdom of God and are beloved of creation, even as children are loved in the eyes of elders.

Blessed indeed are those among us today and tomorrow who walk the good talk and who are earth-walkers. For such have seen with the eyes of the soul and know in the knowledge of experience that soul-seeing is truth. And this truth is simple and belongs to life.

Blessed indeed are those disciplined and profound with silence, and respectful in their measured words. In the chaos of upheaval and in the ordeals of betrayal, still they value honesty above profit and integrity, which bestows freedom, above possessions and enslavement to things.

Blessed indeed are the myth-singers, who have gone down into the ancient and recovered the medicine of sanity, and the storytellers and poets, and those who re-enchaut us and initiate our bodies into dancing with the rhythms of the Earth.

For such celebrants give bone and living tissue to the dreams of God, but shake off disfiguring shadows and blow away, with chanting breath, the dun smoke of nightmares and misdirecting lies. For those who are deep are collectors of power. And beauty is most precious among the gifts we come giving.

Blessed indeed are you who have prayed with these words. And are pregnant now and are nurturing them inside, as words of your own. For you shall drop upon the Earth in your seasons as seeds of the Tree of Life. And the fruit that ripens from your roots shall be the food of salvation.

In those days, even angels will enter your orchards, smiling the smile of grace, and with the open hands of holy beggars. And you who are but of the Earth will feed them and satisfy the hunger of Heaven.

—David Sparenberg is a poet and actor who lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia. Art by Sally Lynn Askins.

A Cross Theology...

by Deborah Lynn

when we are told to take up our cross and follow Jesus, could that mean to take up, to embrace the very thing that is fear to you, that is shame to you, that signals your very death...take that/those things up and bring them with you as you walk and live the teachings ascribed to Jesus A. Christ.

Have I decided to follow Jesus?

there is a cost to this discipleship.

Have I decided to follow Jesus?

this will cost.

Have I decided to follow Jesus?

nothing less than my heart, my soul, my life.

Have I decided to follow Jesus?

there is no turning back.
there is no going home.
there may well be no home.

Just what have I decided?

—Deborah Lynn is a poet and massage therapist who lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and occasionally serves as roadie for singer Kate Campbell. Art by Matthew Rosencrans.

Lovers in a Dangerous Time

a sermon

by Ken Sehested

Scripture Texts: Genesis 6:11, Psalms 90:12, Romans 12:14-21

Canadian musician and songwriter Bruce Cockburn sums up how a lot of us feel when he sings a line in one of his songs: “We are lovers in a dangerous time.”

Yes, *lovers in a dangerous time*. That kinda brings it all home, doesn’t it? It’s a fitting description, don’t you think, for people like you and me, living in the times that we live, loving in the manner that we love—trying, as best we know how, in as far as we have strength and courage, to keep our eyes stayed on Jesus, to keep our eyes on the prize.

“*We’ve come this far by faith*”—so goes the determined, defiant words of faith in one of my favorite spirituals.

*Leaning on the Lord. Trusting in God’s Holy Word.
God’s never failed us yet.*

“Oh, oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, can’t turn around, we’ve come this far by faith.”

This far by faith. According the epistle to the Hebrews, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (11:1). Faith is taking what most onlookers would simply have to call a “risky gamble.” One of the Apostle Paul’s favorite synonyms for faith was “foolishness.”

And why are these dangerous times? Well, because we know some people have been injured climbing mountains. Faith can get you killed.

One of my more contemporary heroes, Clarence Jordan, founder in 1942 of Koinonia Farm in South Georgia, said that “faith is not a stubborn belief in spite of the evidence.” Instead, “faith is life lived in scorn of the consequences.”

We are lovers in a dangerous time. But we’ve come this far by faith—by a faith that moves us to live in scorn of the consequences.

Can’t turn back now.



You want to know what faith is? I thought I had a pretty good idea, until some years ago, when our family went camping with some friends over in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. One of our friends knows the area very well. In fact, he’s a spelunker—that odd word we apply to people who like to go exploring in caves deep under the earth. Our friend is also a mountain climber, and he brought his ropes and harness along in case anyone wanted to do some repelling—another of those odd words for people who dangle down the side of mountains on a rope.

Well, we decided to give it a try—but only off a beginner’s cliff that was, oh, twenty feet or so high. The particular harness we used was actually very safe. It was the beginner’s model. The rope was tied through it in such a way that it would slid through very slowly. And the person on the ground beneath us, holding the other end of the rope, could at any moment stop your fall in mid-air simply by pulling tight on the rope.

What better assurance could you ask for?

That’s exactly what I kept telling myself as I strapped in to that harness, turned with my back to the cliff’s edge, and

Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

began inching backward, feeling for the edge with my feet, reaching it, then slowly leaning backwards—backwards, I tell you!—over the edge of that cliff, finally to the point where my body was perpendicular to the vertical cliff wall, then walking—or should I say creeping—down that sheer mountain side, with every muscle begging for mercy, with nothing but a rock floor beneath me. Let me tell you, 20 feet looks a lot higher when you're at the top looking down.

Needless to say, walking backwards over a cliff, on purpose, is a very unnatural feeling. All of my common sense danger alarms were going off at once. *But this is so safe*, I kept repeating to myself, *this is so safe*.

And my self kept screaming back, *The hell it is!*

I finally reached the bottom of that 20-foot precipice;

*In the presence of such violence—in
the fearfulness it provokes in our daily
routines—how then are we to live?
How then are we to follow Jesus?*

and after my adrenaline pump slowed enough to let my brain do some rational thinking, it occurred to me that the secret to this little exercise is very simple: You have to trust that rope is going to hold you. You can't know for sure—for absolutely, positively, money-back guaranteed sure—that it will hold...until...until you put your weight on it, until it's actually too late to turn back. By then, it will either hold or it won't.

Oh, sure, you can examine the rope ahead of time. Put it through some stress tests. Make sure the rope is anchored to a solid place. Make sure the harness is in working order. But at some point you either lean back into the thin air or you don't.

And if that's not enough, you then watch your 10-year-old do the same thing!

Faith, brothers and sisters. Life lived in scorn of the consequences. We are lovers in a dangerous time.

And why are we lovers? Well, the short answer is, because we've been loved, and that love has infected us.

And why is this a dangerous time? Well, because we know some people have been injured climbing mountains. Faith can get you killed. Some people—like Brother Martin Luther King, for instance—some people have died on that mountain.

Faith can break your heart, can lead you to the cliffs of despair. You know people who've experienced those troubles. Maybe you've experienced them yourself. Faith is foolishness—so says the world, including many of our friends, family members—even many in the church. It's like the story

from one of the early church leaders who told of a stranger wandering up onto a baptismal service on the banks of a dark and foreboding river. Startled, he says "You could get killed doing that." His quiet exclamation was overheard by another standing near, who replied: "Now you're getting the message."

We are indeed lovers, by the grace of God; and this is most certainly a dangerous time. More so than most. Our culture is wracked by fear. Our TV screens reveal so many frightening images: our own young people in the midst of mortar and gunfire, fighting a war that our newly-appointed Secretary of Defense says we're losing; genocide raging across the African continent, suicide bombs and armored tanks perpetuating one of the most ancient of "holy wars;" children in US high schools opening fire on their fellow students; US officials maintaining their control on us by telling us that everyone wants to kill us.

We are lovers in a dangerous time. We live in the most violent nation, just coming out of the most violent century, in recorded human history. These assessments are not the stereotypical exaggerations which we've come to expect of politicians, used-car salesmen, and preachers.

They're the judgments of social scientists and based on empirical evidence. In the 20th century, war alone caused an estimated 110 million deaths, more than a million a year. Despite recent nuclear weapons treaties, there are still 45,000 thermonuclear warheads trained in readiness.

Various other forms of structural violence—things like poverty, racism, hunger, preventable disease—these forces of evil continue to result in an estimated 19 million deaths per year. Coalition governments are pouring billions and billions of dollars into an uncertain war in Iraq, while hundreds of millions of people don't have enough food to eat. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is rampaging across Africa like the Black Death did in medieval times.

By now you may be asking, "Just what does this have to do with following Jesus?" (I take that question, by the way, to be the premier question of Christian faith.)

The answer is not as complex as you might think. Recall the text read earlier, the one from Genesis, where the testimony summarizes the status of creation: "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight"—that's what we call a spiritual assessment. "And the earth was filled with violence"—there's your sociopolitical analysis.

Notice that the two are correlated. They are parallel judgments. They're intentionally linked in one single thought. In biblical terms, corruption—sin—is always and everywhere linked with violence, with the breakdown of harmony in creation, with the destruction of relationships of justice. In the Bible, rebellion against God and brokenness in creation are mirror images of the same reality.

In the presence of such violence—in the fearfulness it provokes in our daily routines—how then are we to live?

How then are we to follow Jesus?

By loving, of course. This is a dangerous time. But we are lovers. In our principle text for today, Paul indicates how we are to live:

By blessing instead of cursing. By entering fully into both the pain and the joy of those around us. By living in harmony. By refusing to be haughty, by not catering to the high and mighty, by associating ourselves with those for whom the world has no use.

Brothers and sisters, this is not a political sermon coming from a social activist. This is the word of the Gospel: We are shaped in the ways of compassion because we have been loved by One Who is greater than we.

By refusing to take revenge—refusing to take part in what the world considers “just” warfare, this and other forms of violence the world feels necessary for its salvation—but instead trusting in God’s providence. By taking the initiative to feed even your enemies when they are hungry.

These suggestions are part of a longer list in the 12th chapter of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. The list is in no way meant to be exhaustive. He’s just mentioning a few practical ideas for manifesting in the body what has occurred in the spirit. Then Paul closes with a thought echoing from Jesus.

The latter’s statement is scandalously mistranslated in most versions of the Bible as “resist not evil,” implying a passive, even fatalistic acceptance of the world’s malevolent forces of evil. What Jesus said, and it’s quite clear from the Greek, was “do not attack evil with evil.” He then goes on to give his own practical advice about how you might overpower evil with acts of disarmed love—things like turning the other cheek, going the second mile, etc.

Paul’s version says: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.” It’s as if to say, “don’t play into the hands of evil doers by adopting their tactics and their weapons. Choose different weapons.” Neither Jesus nor Paul recommend passivity in the face of evil. Just the opposite.

In fact, there is a militancy in both their recommendations which the English text does not convey. In both statements there is the implied corollary: “Don’t be militant in the same way evil people are militant. Be militant in a transformed way, with transformed weapons, leading to transformed life.”

Brothers and sisters, this is no political sermon coming from a social activist. This is the word of the Gospel: We are shaped in the ways of compassion because we have been loved by One Who is greater than we. We are saved by submitting to the disarming power of grace. “Not by might, not by power,” as the prophet says, “but by my Spirit, says the Lord.”

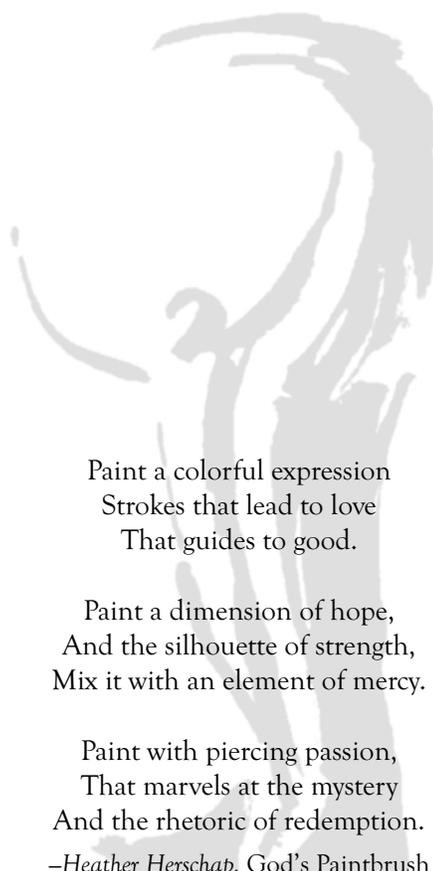
And the result of our disarmed hearts—our coming to terms with God—is that we instinctively begin, without even thinking about it, to live as disarming agents in the world. We are freed from fear. And fearless people are seen as subversive to those now in control. We preach salvation to a corrupt world, justice and peace to a violent social order. We conform to the pattern of Jesus, our Lord-become-friend, who was himself God’s action of unilateral disarmament, loving us before we had either the capacity nor the intention of reciprocating. And thereby overcoming evil.

We are lovers in a dangerous time.

Friends, this is the good news of the Gospel. This is our evangelical calling. Its power stands ready, available to you. Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Thanks be to God.

—Ken Sehested, founding director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, is now a pastor in Asheville, North Carolina.



Paint a colorful expression
Strokes that lead to love
That guides to good.

Paint a dimension of hope,
And the silhouette of strength,
Mix it with an element of mercy.

Paint with piercing passion,
That marvels at the mystery
And the rhetoric of redemption.

—Heather Herschap, God’s Paintbrush

Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

We Can't

A Nested Meditation
by Sharon Rollins

We can't.

We can't go on living.

We can't go on living as if nothing has happened.

We can't go on living as if nothing has happened.

War, hunger, despair must be faced.

We can't go on living as if nothing has happened.

War, hunger, despair must be faced with peace, justice, and love.

*–Sharon Rollins is a therapist and artist in Waco, Texas. She borrowed the style of “nested meditations”
from Kevin Anderson’s Divinity in Disguise.*

Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.





We Prepare

A Nested Meditation
by Sharon Rollins

We prepare.

We prepare ourselves for the inevitable death of our Lord.

We prepare ourselves for the inevitable death of
Our lording our selves over others.

We prepare ourselves for the inevitable death of
Our lording our selves over others,
So that we too may know resurrection.

—Sharon Rollins is a therapist and artist in Waco, Texas. She borrowed the style of “nested meditations” from Kevin Anderson’s Divinity in Disguise. Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

A Boy with a Donkey

A children's monologue for Palm Sunday

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-44

Setting: Outside, out of sight of any of the other settings. A real donkey would enhance the interest of the piece, but is not necessary. He is dressed simply, in peasant garb, barefoot. Palm fronds are spread on the ground where he is standing.

I am a peasant. There has never been anything very fascinating about my life. I've never been outside of the city walls and never owned anything fancy or expensive—in fact, I've never owned anything! I work hard just to be able to eat every day and sleep indoors.

I was busy at my work—my master is a stable keeper. I was standing beside a donkey that was tied to the door of my master's house. Suddenly these two men came up to me and began untying the donkey. I wanted to stop them, but I didn't know what to do.

"What are you doing, untying that donkey?" I asked them. "That donkey belongs to my master, and I will not let you have it!" I wanted to sound firm, but to myself I sounded very small. I thought the men would laugh at me, but they just turned and smiled kindly.

"Our master has sent us for this donkey. He needs it and will send it back very soon."

Well, I decided, for some reason, to trust them. I allowed them to take the donkey. After they had walked off, I ran around the corner of the house to my older brothers.

"You won't believe what just happened," I cried. They just looked down at me uninterested.

"Ahh, go on," they sneered. "Leave us alone."

I tried to explain to them what happened, but they turned their backs to me, like they always do. So I walked back to the front of the house. I decided to walk into town to see if I could find the men with my master's donkey.

As I got closer to the city, I heard great, joyful shouts coming from the main street. I ran the rest of the way, wondering what was happening. All I could see when I got there was hundreds of people waving palm branches and crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in highest heaven!"

I hopped up and down trying to catch a glimpse of the person they were shouting about. Suddenly the crowd parted for a moment, and to my surprise I saw my donkey with a man sitting on it! My mouth dropped open as I watched this man enter into Jerusalem. Suddenly I thought to myself,

"He is more than those two men's master. There is something very special about him. Maybe this really is the Messiah, the long-expected one, the one who is supposed to come and save my people."

Man, I wished my brothers could have been there to see it. Somehow, though, I knew that it didn't matter to me if they believed me or not. All that mattered is that I felt that I had been of service to my true master, the master of us all—the chosen one of God.

—from *Easter Walk: A Drama for Children*, Seeds of Hope Publishers



Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

Quotes, Poems, & Pithy Sayings

Are you ready to cut off your head and place your foot on it? If so, come; Love awaits you! Love is not grown in a garden, nor sold in the marketplace; whether you are a king or a servant, the price is your head, and nothing less. Yes, the cost of the elixir of love is your head. O miser, it is cheap at that price!

—Abu Hamid Al-Ghazzali

When you love you should not say, “God is in my heart,” but rather, “I am in the heart of God.”

And think not you can direct the course of love, for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course.

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

Child, when do you think is the time to love somebody the most; when they done good and made things easy for everybody? Well then, you ain't through learning—because that ain't the time at all. It's when he's at his lowest and can't believe in hisself 'cause the world done whipped him so.

—Lorraine Hansberry, from *Raisin in the Sun*

I believe that
imagination is stronger
than knowledge—
myth is more potent
than history—
dreams are more powerful
than facts—
hope always triumphs
over experience
laughter is the cure for grief—
love is stronger than death.
—Robert Fulghum

A religious awakening which
does not awaken the sleeper
to love has roused him in
vain.

Jessamyn West,
The Quaker Reader

Risking to go where Jesus went, risking life and limb in the name of Christ, is a calculated risk that reflects the best of radical Christianity. So is protesting the death penalty, resisting the payment of war taxes, and joining a Christian Peacemaker Team. We believe that God saves us from our enemies, by his grace, the same way God saves us from our sins. And so we take what we sing, what we pray, and what we believe seriously. It's a matter of life and resurrection.

—Jim Amstutz, *Threatened With Resurrection*

Whoso loves, believes the impossible.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Tell me whom you love and I will tell you who you are.

—Arsène Houssaye



I live by the body.
I will die by the body.

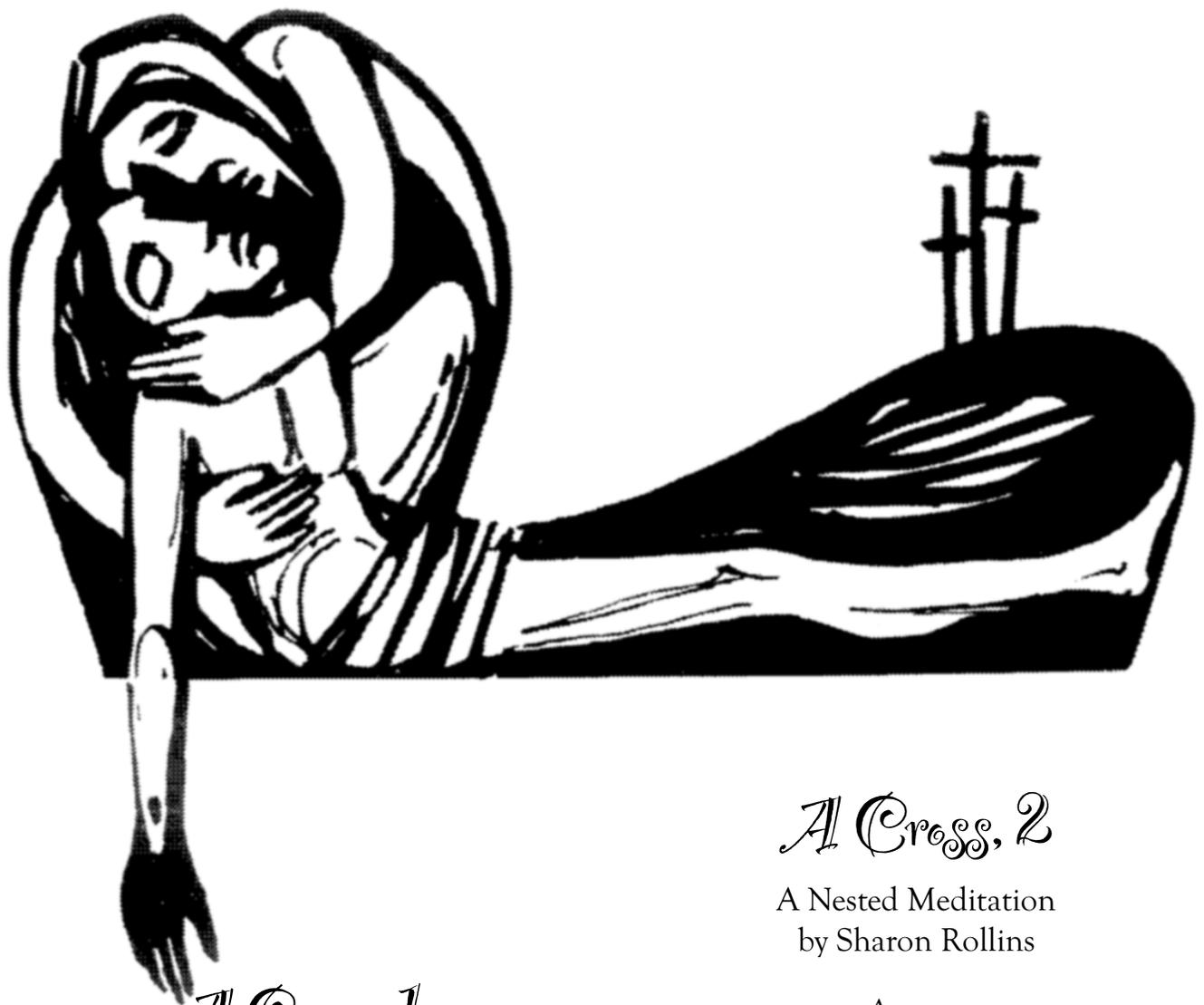
Spirit and Flesh
fuse
in the Breath.

Tell them
I Am
has sent you.

Live your body.
Die your body.
Still,
we are
One.

• Deborah Lynn•

Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.



A Cross, 1

A Nested Meditation
by Sharon Rollins

A cross.

A crossing over, of sorts.

A crossing over, of sorts,
From life unto death.

A crossing over, of sorts,
From life unto death,
Into life—resurrection.

A Cross, 2

A Nested Meditation
by Sharon Rollins

A cross.

Across my life, I have known death and dying.

Across my life, I have known death—
And dying, daily, to know life.

Across my life, I have known death—
And dying daily to no lifeless cause,
I see that I must give freely.

A cross—my life: I have known death,
And dying daily to know lifeless cause,
I see that I must give freely of myself
If I would truly live.

—Sharon Rollins is a therapist and artist in Waco, Texas. She borrowed the style of “nested meditations” from Kevin Anderson’s *Divinity in Disguise*. Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.



It is Good

A Nested Meditation
by Sharon Rollins

It is good.

It is Good Friday.

It is Good Friday,
A day of darkness.

It is Good Friday,
A day of darkness
Shadows fall.

It is Good Friday,
A day of darkness.
Shadows fall, but not without a ray of light
to cast them.

–Sharon Rollins is a therapist and artist in Waco, Texas. She borrowed the style of “nested meditations” from Kevin Anderson’s Divinity in Disguise. Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

a silent withholding
my heart scabs the pain
joy waits ~ the underbelly of love.

~Deborah Lynn



Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

An Unspectacular Easter

by Dawn Ripley

Today's not been the Easter I'd intended or planned. One Easter morning during my college days, a dear friend (thank you again, Alan) roused me from a sound sleep, much to my irritation and near anger, and changed everything I'd known about Easter morning and thinking about resurrection.

We wandered the campus until the sun rose enough that we could read poetry together, then we went to our church, where the service opened as the lights rolled in

I was heading back to bed when it hit me: Resurrection's not always spectacular. Perhaps sometimes it's even ordinary. . .

from the back to strains of Dan Fogelberg's "To the Morning."

Every Easter morning since, with rare exception, I've found a way to greet the sunrise with poetry and John 20, usually either near a body of water or in the woods, and always accompanied by a hot cuppa tea or joe.

Over the years, the ritual has expanded to include omelettes and mimosas with a good friend or two, and then a church with big music; can it really be Easter without finding yourself part of a full house of a congregation, belting out all the verses of "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"?

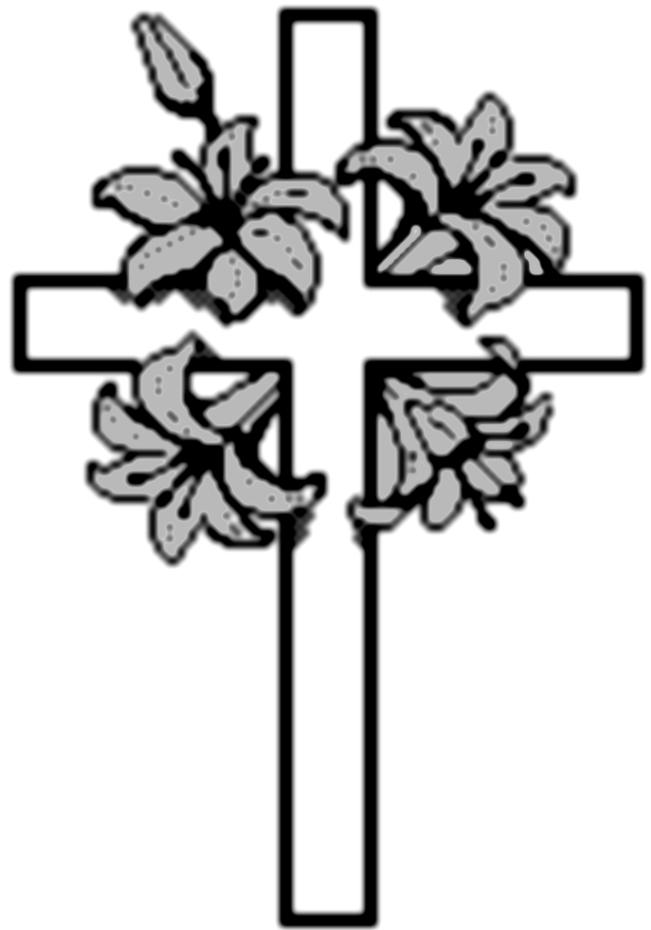
But not today. I slept through my alarm, only to waken by light that shouldn't have been coming through my window without my being out by the pond to greet it. So I rushed to the front porch only to discover that cloud cover was going to prevent anything more than the subtlest of sunrises.

Aggravated with myself and with nature, I was heading back to bed when it hit me: Resurrection's not always spectacular. Perhaps sometimes it's even ordinary; after all, any day of the week could be Easter, and perhaps should be. So I left the volumes of poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Wendell Berry, and Mary Oliver stacked in

waiting on the dining table and allowed myself the heresy of sleeping in on Easter morning.

I'll be looking for that spectacular pondside sunrise some morning this week or next, and I'll have the poetry at the ready, because any morning just might be Easter all over again. And I'll be on the lookout for all of those ordinary ways that the world offers us to practice resurrection.

In the meantime, I trust that this Easter greeting finds you celebrating life, practicing resurrection, and learning to let Love (as Blake would say) "easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cressed east."
—Dawn Ripley, a writer, booklover, and conservationist, lives on a farm near New Albany, Indiana.



Art by Hermano León of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

Terror, Amazement and Fear: A Real Response to Resurrection

a sermon for Easter Sunday

by Lanny Peters

Scripture text: 15:33-16:8

This is a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay:

*I am not resigned to the shutting away of
loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for it has been
time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go,
the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.*

*Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains, but the best is lost.*

*The answers quick and keen, the honest look,
the laughter, the love,
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses.
Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know.
But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes
than all the roses in the world.*

*Down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.*

At the end, according to Mark's gospel, among all those who had followed Jesus—including the twelve men that he had specially chosen—only a group of women remained. After his arrest, all of the rest had fled that night or drifted away over the next couple of days.

Some fled to protect themselves from the same fate. Others drifted away after news of his death, realizing he was not the Messiah after all. According to Mark's

account, only some women had watched in horror as their beloved leader was strung up on a cross like a common criminal.

These women had followed Jesus and provided for him since the beginning of his public ministry in Galilee. They had known Jesus and believed in him. They had left everything behind to follow him. They loved him. But they had watched helplessly as he suffered a humiliating execution.

They witnessed the torture, the pain, the blood, and the agony of the cross. And yet, they stayed to the bitter end when Jesus gave his last cry and breathed his last breath. They looked on as his torn and lifeless body was taken down.



Though they could hardly walk, they had followed at a distance and seen where they had put his body, in a tomb cut from a rock. When a large stone was rolled to cover it, all their dreams were buried along with him. With no hope for the future, everything they did that day and the next must have been a torture for them. Every fiber of their being must have cried out, "What's the use! Why go on?"

Three of the women rose early on the first day of the week to go on and do what little they could. They had decided to go to the tomb and at least give Jesus a decent

According to Mark's account, only some women had watched in horror as their beloved leader was strung up on a cross like a common criminal.

burial, taking with them spices to properly anoint the body. They walked in silence, until one of them suddenly remembered the large stone blocking the entrance to the tomb and wondered aloud who they could get to help them move it.

But when they came to the tomb, they saw that the rock was already rolled away. They must have been afraid that the body had been snatched, to be cast into the town dump or used in some such further humiliation. Terrified, they cautiously entered the tomb. Sure enough, the body was gone. But then they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side of the tomb.

He said to them, "Do not be afraid; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

They stood there and said nothing, for who knows how long. Then "they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

And that is the ending of Mark's Gospel. Wait a minute! That's it? If the Gospel of Mark were made into a movie, this would be quite unsatisfactory. It ends way too abruptly. Too much is unresolved. We don't even see Jesus alive again. In fact, in the original Greek, the last sentence ends with a conjunction as in mid-sentence.

Some early readers of Mark's gospel couldn't stand this inconclusive ending, and two alternative endings were added decades later to the original manuscripts. Some of those endings we could have done without, like the verses where people are encouraged to handle poisonous snakes as a sign

that they believe in the gospel. A while ago, when Larry Jones, a member of our congregation, performed his unique poem/dance "Vine Snake Celebrate," one person told me they feared Larry was going to pull out a real snake. That may have been as close as we've ever come to fulfilling that directive.

The other three gospels, which came later than Mark's, each have stories about the risen Christ appearing to the disciples, such as the one in the Gospel of John, where Jesus gently calls Mary's name and she recognizes his voice. I love the stories of unnamed disciples meeting Jesus as a stranger on the road to Emmaus and recognizing him when they invite him into their home, Thomas touching the wounds of the risen Christ, and Christ cooking up breakfast on the beach in Galilee.

But Mark's Gospel, in its original form, does not have a single resurrection story. Still, I have come to appreciate it just as much as the others. Terror, amazement, and fear just may be the most honest place to be on Easter morning. Of all the mysteries our faith invites us to contemplate, resurrection is the most astonishing and the most incomprehensible. It shatters all the categories with which we make sense of our world.

Patrick Wilson has said of Mark's ending:

He refuses to tie the loose ends of the gospel into a tidy bow of fleeting consolations. The final verses are ambiguous: a promise greeted by fear; a pledge that we will "see him" swamped by our own uncertainty and dread. What Mark's ending lacks in romance it makes up for in sheer realism. Isn't this the world we live in? No enchanted world of thinly fabricated happily-ever-afters, but a world in which we hold tightly to the promise and fearfully tread our way through a tangle of doubts and amazements. (Christian Century, April 4, 1994)

A few years ago, when the Lectionary texts for Easter Sunday included Mark's version of the resurrection, I called Kate Hauk, who had suffered some significant losses in her family. I called her to ask how she would feel about reading Mark's resurrection story in the service. She immediately said she would if it were the original version. That ending she could relate to; the one that ended with the women being seized with terror, amazement and fear, with no words to express all their feelings.

There is a tendency within Christianity to use the resurrection as a form of denial of death. You hear it when people say someone is better off now that they are dead. Karen's grandmother died in February at the age of 101, after a remarkable life, leaving a rich legacy of love. For a good while, she had not recognized anyone, and showed no will to live. Maybe in cases like this, death can be welcomed.

Then there are deaths that come way too soon. These deaths cause suffering that is in no way natural.

Down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know, but I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

*But Mark's Gospel, in its original form,
does not have a single resurrection story.
Still, I have come to appreciate it just as
much as the others. Terror, amazement, and
fear just may be the most honest place to be
on Easter morning.*

I like the ending of the gospel of Mark because it refuses to offer easy or trite explanations to the questions of suffering and death.

From the messenger in the empty tomb, the women get neither consolation nor explanation, but they are told where they can find Jesus. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.

He has been raised; he is not here. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going on ahead of you to Galilee." Did you notice that the fact that Peter and the disciples had utterly failed Jesus is not even mentioned? A new day has dawned, full of forgiveness and grace.

But why meet in Galilee? Do you know where Galilee is? Well, it's nowhere special. It's where Nazareth is, the hometown of Jesus. You might recall that when someone was told that Jesus was the Messiah, that person cynically remarked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" There was nothing special about Galilee.

But maybe that's it. Maybe that is what is special. We are told that we will meet Jesus in the ordinary places of life. He will meet you on your home turf, in the midst of your daily routine. The resurrection itself happened on an ordinary day.

After all, Easter, "The first day of the week." was the Jewish workday. At the beginning of the workweek after the rest of the Sabbath, they go back to what they were doing in daily life. Everything was getting back to normal now after the events of the

past violent weekend. And the risen Christ was raised on that day, that ordinary beginning-of-the-work-week-day. (William Willimon. Pulpit Resource 31(2): 18-19)

On Easter, death has not been removed from our lives. Each and every one of us sitting here will die someday. But God has shown at Easter that it is not the final word. Suffering has not been taken from us. All of us will face suffering in our lives and those around us.

But God has entered into our suffering and pain and shared it. But God has entered our lives and shares in our suffering and pain. God has shown at Easter that death is not the final word. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised, he is not here." Jesus has gone on ahead of us to be present in all the Galilees of our ordinary living.

Christ the Lord is risen.

—Lanny Peters is pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia.

Forever

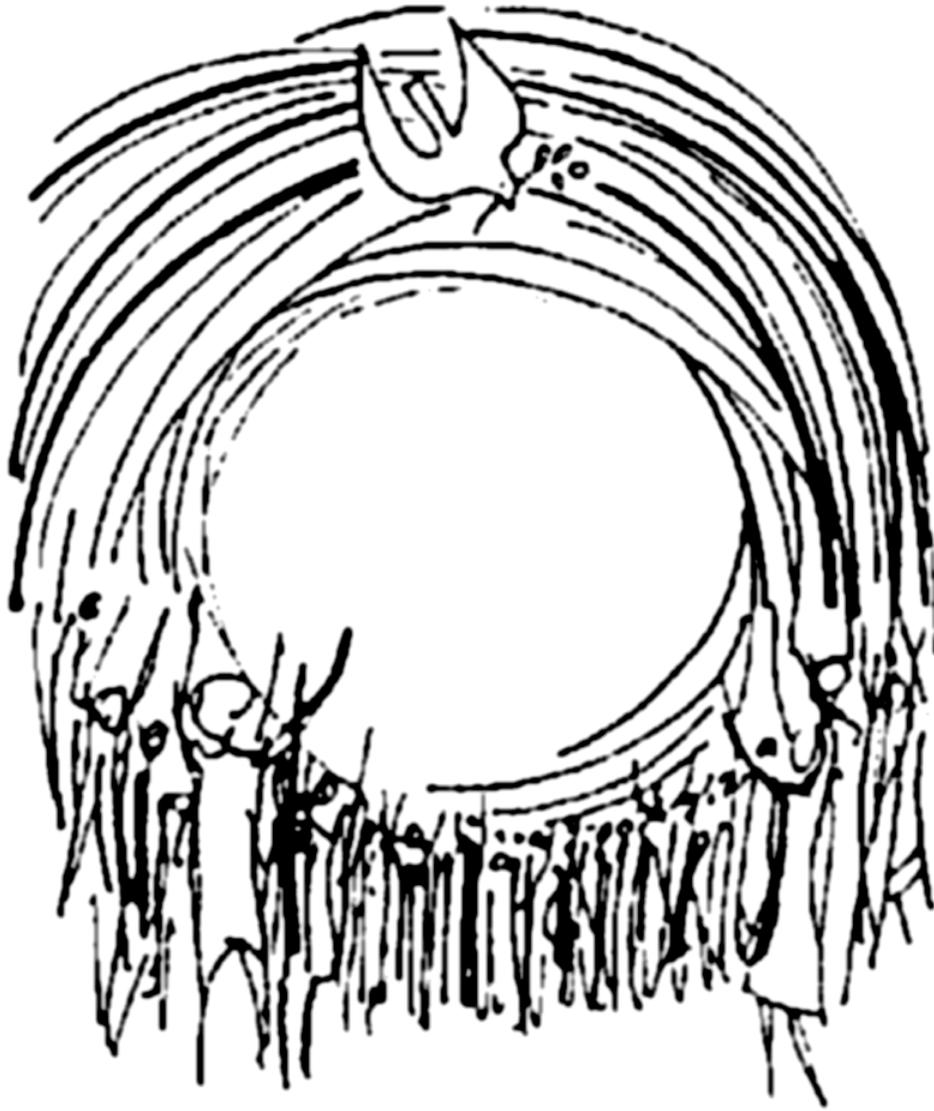
by Heather Herschap

A cry is heard
On the night so quiet and still
Many journey from far and wide.
There's a glimpse of the true king's face.
A cry is heard
The kind that excites, offers hope,
and restoration
As bare feet run with
welcoming waving arms.
There's a glimpse of the true king's face.
A cry is heard
When the last breath is taken
When wrong has been done,
one more wish is made, and
There's a glimpse of the true king's face.
A cry is heard
Years later in the corners of the world, alone and together,
All for the need to hear, to hold, and to behold the one...
There's a glimpse of the true king's face.

—Heather Herschap is a student at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas.



benediction



If you dare, take the hand of Jesus
and go with him to Jerusalem.
Along the way, visit friends and challenge power,
Turn water to wine and be extravagant with praise,
For Jesus bids us live a dangerous love
and, in love, he leads us along the way.
—Amy Mears and April Baker

—April Baker and Amy Mears are co-pastors of Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. This benediction is inspired by Lectionary texts for Sundays in Lent year C.