Lenten REFLECTION
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY
IMMACULATA UNIVERSITY
Dear Immaculata Community,

Another Lent begins; the words, “Repent and believe the Good News” are once again spoken to us as we receive the ashes. We will be held accountable for what we did and what we failed to do. Today is a good day to consider what to do this Lent in regard to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Take time to pray each day, give yourself 5-10 minutes of quiet time with the Lord. Share whatever is in your heart and pause to listen to God’s response, it may be a word, a nudge to do something or a feeling of peace, consolation or desolation, or a prompt to forgive someone. God will reveal what God wants to reveal in your prayer. You need to pay attention.

Take time for fasting. It can be fasting from a particular food, which you may have done as a child, but perhaps today it is fasting from your phones or devices for a time each day or fasting from unkind words or judgements.

Take time for almsgiving or giving your time to someone or a cause. Maybe donating to the Rice Bowl or to a student who is in need, or a single item to our IU Cares Food Cupboard.

Another Lent begins; decide what you are going to do. Make it very specific and hold yourself accountable. At the end of each week ask yourself how you are doing. We have been called to repent and believe the Good News and we must hold ourselves accountable with the actions of our lives.

With sincere prayers for a more intentional Lent lived with prayer, fasting and almsgiving,

Sister Mary Henrich IHM
Vice President for Mission and Ministry
Rend your hearts, not your garments and return to the Lord your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment. (Joel 2:12-18)

Today, Christians all over the world will observe the beginning of the season of Lent. During this season, Christians are called to remember the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert. On the first day of Lent, I often think of the loneliness that Jesus must have endured while he was in the desert. I imagine Jesus fasting and praying for forty days, all while being tempted by Satan. During this season of Lent, we too will be tempted by Satan. When we feel these temptations, let us remember the most merciful God who loves us, even amid the temptations that we may feel and occasionally give in to. God made us human, He did not make us perfect. Let us remember that He is a God who is all-loving, all-merciful, and all-forgiving.

God of goodness and mercy,
Hear my prayer as I begin this Lenten journey with you. Let me be honest with myself as I look into my heart and soul, noticing the times I turn away from you. Guide me as I humbly seek to repent and return to your love. May humility guide my efforts to be reconciled with you and live forever in your abundant grace. Transform me this Lent, heavenly Father. Give me the strength to commit myself to grow closer to you each day. Amen.

Katelyn Starr
Class of 2017
Biology
Then he said to all, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (Luke 9:24)

Crosses come in a variety of forms, but we all have them. Maybe your cross is a challenging relationship with a loved one, battling an addiction, a difficult roommate, or any variety of struggle. It is in the carrying of these crosses that we can become closer to Jesus. These crosses provide us a variety of gifts that are such a challenge to experience in our moment of suffering or pain, but these crosses teach us humility, love, strength, faith, hope, etc. Without these crosses, these challenges, in our daily lives we will not grow. Every cross we face is an opportunity to become better and to grow closer to God through joyful suffering.

This Lent I am challenging myself, not to seek out new crosses but to truly embrace the ones I currently carry. To lift them high each morning, put them on my back and carry them with joy, so that I can grow in faith and closer to God. We can all do this through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and of course through loving and supporting our brothers and sisters with their own burdens. I will be sure to keep you all in my prayers during this journey and of course, I ask for yours.

Lord, thank you for all the gifts you have given to me, even the crosses and burdens. Please walk with me and help me to embrace each cross with joy and thanksgiving, knowing that they bring me closer to you with each difficult step. With you by my side, there is nothing I cannot conquer. In Your name, Amen.

Jessica Morrell
Associate Director, Campus Ministry
Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. (Matthew 9:14-15)

Brothers and sisters, there is a time for feasting and a time for fasting. The bridegroom whom Jesus speaks of in this Gospel passage is Himself. Weddings are an occasion for joyous celebration and feasting. The table is a gathering place for physical and metaphysical sharing—being nourished through tangible food and drink, as well as being nourished by the transcendent sustenance of fellowship. However, when Jesus speaks of the bridegroom being taken away, He is speaking of His own forthcoming death, which will overpower physicality. Fasting, an act of physical asceticism, calls one to die to self, in order to bring life to one’s soul. Through the practice of fasting—when done prudently—one strengthens “spiritual muscles”. By occasionally fasting from something that is not bad, but that one does not necessarily need to sustain life, one learns how to master choices.

I recognize that Jesus is not demanding that we reject pleasure, specifically delicious foods. There is a time for feasting and a time for fasting. As embodied spirit persons, we have the power to nourish ourselves twofold. But our souls are more challenging to nourish than our physical bodies. The soul—unlike our bodies—mandates a profound focus that cannot be satiated, or sustained, by anything fleeting. Lent, while solemn, is a beautiful season to focus on spiritual flourishing from physical fasting.

Jesus, this Lenten season, I pray that I can die to self, in order to live more fully.

Francesca M. Medora
Class of 2020
Theology
…I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners. (Luke 5:32)

Happy Leap Year! In today’s gospel reading, Jesus gives us reason to hope. First, He loves us so much that He came to save us from our sins. He gives us many opportunities to hear His message, to listen to His Word, and to put this message into action.

We are only three days into Lent and in a good space to take advantage of the many opportunities that will come to us in the next six weeks. We can spend some extra time in prayer, in religious discussion groups, in service activities, in thinking and speaking kindly of others to name a few.

“Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.” (Ps. 86:11ab) Please help me to “BE”, to listen, and to take one step at a time.

Sister Denise M. Mollica, IHM
Fashion Merchandising
Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1-7)

In creating the garden of Eden, God provided Adam and Eve with the trees of life and knowledge, thus providing them access to everything they might need to live healthy and godly lives, including his constant presence. In today’s world, despite having access to all of the information we might need to make loving, educated, and healthy decisions, we can still struggle to find what we need, and to feel God’s presence in our hectic, daily lives. These worldly complexities can make decision-making daunting, but, in the end, we have to have faith and know that, no matter what we are facing, we have access to the information necessary to do the right thing, to know that God is always with us, and to just, “…trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.” (St. Theresa’s Prayer).

*May today there be peace within.*
*May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.*
*May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.*
*May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.*
*May you be content knowing you are a child of God.*
*Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love.*
*It is there for each and every one of us.* (St. Theresa’s Prayer)

Jeanne M. Dagna, Ed.D.
Class of 2012
Educational Leadership and Administration
Immaculata University Adjunct Professor
Immaculata University Alumni Board of Governors
God said “Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and tell Them: Be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy.” (Leviticus 19:1-2)

God entrusted Moses to give us the Ten Commandments. These rules told us how to live a blessed life. Jesus, however, gave us guidelines in the Beatitudes. Jesus lived by these ideals and set them forward as the son of God with all authority. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Recently, I had the opportunity to stand on the Mountain of the Beatitudes in Israel and look down upon the Sea of Galilee. It was one of the most profound and moving moments of my life. I found myself pondering the Beatitudes in both my personal and professional life. How do I live by these guidelines to live a blessed life? At the very core of Immaculata is my Catholic faith. Striving to live the Beatitudes in all I do is what I feel I give to my students. Knowing and understanding the principles of social justice, care, concern, and respect for life and cultural diversity all come from the premise of the Beatitudes. Living the Beatitudes helps us to enter the kingdom of heaven, and yes it requires sacrifice just as Jesus sacrificed for us.

Help us Jesus to live the gracious and just life to which you call us. Help us to call others to live in ways that honor one another and are just peaceful, respectful and equitable. Help us to recognize God’s Glory in those with whom we live, worship and even disagree, and we can seek to allow God’s glory, grace and compassion to be revealed to them through us. Amen

Dr. Sandra Nolan
Instructor, Division of Nursing
From all their distress God rescues them. (Psalm 34.18b)

Rescue workers play such a visible and significant role in our world these days. Tragedy strikes, and rescuers from near and far flood to assist the needy. Responsive and sacrificial, they seem to know exactly what to do, what to bring, how to act. Whether on a large or small scope of impact, the concept of “rescue” communicates deliverance. I can still see the newsreel of the recent fires in Australia where firefighters and emergency workers tried to save, salvage, and support lives and property consumed by the relentless flames. While food, shelter, and supplies were prepared for the stranded, other rescuers tossed sweat potatoes and carrots from helicopters to try to sustain the animals left without a land in which to forage.

In today’s readings, Isaiah tells us that God’s Word will not return to heaven empty-handed but rather the Word will be fruitful “achieving the end for which I [God] sent it.” In Psalm 34, we experience an exhaustive list of God-in-action: delivering from fear, from shame, from evil, from a crushed spirit, and a broken heart. And when asked about how to pray, Jesus responds that the loving Father knows “what you need before you ask him.” Jesus teaches us to speak to our rescuing God, seeking his forgiveness, deliverance from evil, forgiveness of transgressions….clear and direct supplication for our daily bread that we might live God’s will on earth as it is in heaven.

Oh rescuing Lord, look upon my distress with eyes of compassion. Hear the sound of my longing prayer. And rescue me from where the shadows of darkness blind me. May Your Word echo through my being bearing fruit in abundance. Amen.

Sister Ann Heath, IHM
Director, Higher Education EdD Program
For you are not pleased with sacrifices; should I offer a burnt offering, you would not accept it. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn. (Psalm 51:18-19)

It seems that over time we, as people, tend to become less and less patient. This leads to us looking for faster responses and more “quick fixes” when things go wrong, rather than taking the time to reflect on each situation, find the root of the problem, and consider a solid solution. For example, when we do something wrong, a quick way to move on is to simply say, “I’m sorry.” It takes a lot more patience, time, energy and humility to admit where we went wrong and to find a way to avoid that wrongdoing again.

Lent is a special time for us to reflect on our daily choices, actions, and relationships. We can use this time to focus on ways to live with a more “contrite spirit,” and strive for more authentic ways to offer repentance to God and to others in our lives. Today and throughout the rest of the Lenten season, let us speak to God through more personal prayer, and be willing “listen” to God’s response with a humbler heart.

Merciful Lord, fill my heart with the willingness to imitate your humility in my own life. Let my sacrifices to you be those that help me grow closer to a life rooted in your love. I ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Erin Malinowski
Class of 2010
Mathematics
Jesus said to his disciples: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7)

Have you seen those colorful wristbands that people wear to support a cause? Did you know that you can buy your own, just one at a time? Ten years ago, I did this. I bought one with “Matthew 7:7” written on it. I was a new mom, so in love with my sweet daughter but also lonely and exhausted. One day, in a moment of desperation, I picked up my Bible and began searching for hope. That’s when I found Matthew 7:7. I cried. I was not alone! I just needed to ask for His help!

Even now, I often find myself caught up in the day’s seemingly endless demands. Do you, too, struggle to “get it all done” and make time for what really matters? Remember, you are never alone. You just need to knock on God’s door! He is there to carry us during our darkest times and even help guide us to weed out what is not bringing us joy.

This season of Lent begs us to lay aside our own ego, and to prepare for the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for our salvation. Let us honor that sacrifice by humbling ourselves to ask God for His help and His comfort.

Dear God, help us find the courage to humble ourselves to ask for you, to seek your love and to knock on your door when we need your strength and wisdom most. In the busiest of days, help us remember that you are what matters, and when we seek you first, we will be armed with your love. Amen.

Brandy Leininger
Admissions Counselor
College of Adult Professional Studies
I pray to God—my life a prayer—and wait for what he’ll say and do.
My life’s on the line before God, my Lord, waiting and watching till morning, … (Psalm 130: 5-6)

I rather like that paraphrase I found of Psalm 130 in The Message. The De Profundis, is a beautiful one for this season. Whatever the depths that hold us, we can still call on our God to be our strength and refuge. Lent’s somber tone can lead our thoughts and feelings towards the sadineses and difficulties of the world around us and we might be overwhelmed with what we see and hear. We might also be overwhelmed with our own weaknesses, but even though this is a “penitential psalm”, we can rejoice at the promise that God does not keep a record of our sinfulness with which to torment us. If God did, we certainly “could not stand.” We are reminded that God’s nature is to have mercy and to offer us plentiful redemption.

“My life a prayer…” yes, that is lovely! It can be even when that prayer comes out of repentance or discouragement. Our lives are on the line before God and God will redeem us—every time. It’s a good psalm for any season actually. We don’t have to wait for Lent.
I find this psalm to be a comfort, a reminder that no matter what, God is with me, waiting as Thomas Keating reminds us, for me to acknowledge that presence within. This psalm connects us to our interior selves and the faith we have that when we ask, “Lord, hear my voice…” our voice is heard.

Open our hearts to hear your invitation to a deeper relationship with you, gracious God. Give us grace to know that your forgiveness is absolute, your love infinite.

Rev Susanna Metz D.Min
Class of 1972
Music
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