

LENT

O Lord and Master of my life,
give me not the spirit of laziness,
despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of sobriety,
humility, patience and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King,
grant me to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother,
for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen

-- St. Ephraim the Syrian (AD 305-373)

Lent is ultimately about the Gospel. It's during this time that we are invited to stop, pause, and slow down in order to enter into a more intentionally season of prayer, examination, and confession. Lent is also a time to imitate Christ – commemorating his 40-day fast in the wilderness. This draws us deep to realize that Lent is not merely a time for our own spiritual strengthening, but also a discipline in loving others as well.

As Pastor Chuck Colson writes, “Lent gives us the opportunity to move towards our neighbor in charity” because it “emphasizes simplicity for the sake of others.” We want to do more than simply abstain from movies and simplify our calendars – we want our affections for Christ to be radically stirred as we forms us to reflect his glory more and more. Lent allows us to see the parts of ourselves we'd rather keep covered up and surrender them to the only one who can restore us.

I hope and pray that as you read, journal, mediate, pause, breathe deeply, open your eyes, and expose your heart that the scandal and glory of the cross will be made ever clear and the resurrection call will beckon louder than ever.

Celebrated each spring as the days begin to lengthen (the term Lent is from a Saxon word meaning "lengthen"), Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 46 days before Easter Sunday. It is marked by periods of fasting and feasting.

Each week, participants traditionally fast during the week and feast on Sundays. This pattern continues throughout the season as the Church journeys toward the Holy Week commencing on Palm Sunday. The final period of Lent is often referred to as the Triduum, beginning Maundy Thursday and continuing through Easter Sunday.

In our context, it is easy to get lost in the cultural expectations of Easter and miss out on the meaning. Lent is a reminder that the resurrection only occurred after the crucifixion. Rather than skipping over the ministry and crucifixion of Christ, Lent is a season to prepare ourselves for the joy of Resurrection Sunday as we enter the sorrow and pain which preceded it.

- The Village Church (Flower Mound, TX)

“We do not want merely to see beauty... we want something else which can hardly be put into words- to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”

– C.S. Lewis

BEAUTY IN THE COMMON PHOTO A DAY LENT CHALLENGE

During this season of slowing and seeing – we invite you to post a photo each day following the calendar below with the hashtag #beautyinthecommon.. Our hope and prayer is that by pausing each day of Lent to see beauty in mundane, unexpected places, that your heart will become more and more attuned to seeing God's presence all around us.

Using the calendar below, post a picture each day that shows a glimpse of beauty in that area. You can then search the hashtag and pray for others who are also posting. Pray that your image might encourage, spur, or inspire someone else.

FEBRUARY

- 19 joy
- 20 stillness
- 21 blessing
- 22 discipline
- 23 sabbath
- 24 power
- 25 path
- 26 creation
- 27 adventure
- 28 liturgy

MARCH

- 1 simple
- 2 chaos
- 3 community
- 4 tedious
- 5 familiar
- 6 moment
- 7 weathered
- 8 patience
- 9 meager
- 10 forgiveness
- 11 meditation
- 12 movement
- 13 subtle
- 14 traditions
- 15 sacrifice
- 16 respite
- 17 unraveled
- 18 transparent
- 19 unexpected
- 20 solitude
- 21 vulnerability
- 22 gratitude
- 23 form
- 24 affection
- 25 design
- 26 light
- 27 composition
- 28 growth
- 29 struggle
- 30 architecture
- 31 weakness

APRIL

- 1 rehearsed
- 2 unknown
- 3 pain
- 4 valley
- 5 victory

WEEKLY FASTS

Each week, we have suggested an area of fasting to apply to our lives. Far from a mere responsibility, these weekly fasts give us opportunities to pursue greater communion with Christ. By emptying our lives of commotion, clutter and noise, we hope to find greater room for Him to speak through His Word. Rather than simply subtracting something from our lives, this is an opportunity to add something greater.

Some of the fasts are traditional (food, caffeine, sweets), while others may be new for many of us (media, sleep, shopping). These particular fasts were chosen because each represents a common comfort to which our culture runs for distraction. The hope for each is that a season of unplugging from the background buzz will be leveraged for the sake of communing with the Lord. Therefore, we should consider ways in which we can leverage the fast to engage in deeper prayer, study, community, meditation, etc

If you are unfamiliar with the discipline of fasting, please visit poplarcreek.com, click on "RESOURCES" and then on the word "FASTING" for more resources.

READINGS

This guide will walk you through seven weeks of Lent. Each week includes a reading from the Gospel of John that will also be taught during services at our church, Poplar Creek Church in Bartlett, IL. These messages are available under the "LISTEN ONLINE" tab at poplarcreek.com

We encourage you to read the passages, at least once a week (preferably Sunday) and consider journaling, discussing, or praying through the text the rest of the week. Some potential questions could be:

- What surprises me about this passage? What stands out to me?
 - What attributes of Christ or his followers do I see here?
 - How can/should I respond to what I just read?

WEEK 1 || STILLNESS

WEEKLY FAST: FOOD

46 So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. 48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." 49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. 51 As he was going down, his servants[met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. 54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

- John 4:46-54

Lined area for reflection and response.

“In a noise polluted world, it is even difficult to hear ourselves think let alone try to be still and know God. Yet it seems essential for our spiritual life to seek some silence, no matter how busy we may be. Stillness is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God”

- Susan Muto

WEEK 2 || CHAOS

WEEKLY FAST: TV & MOVIES

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” 7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.”

9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.

18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

- John 5:1-18

“Two painters each painted a picture to illustrate his concept of rest. The first chose for his scene a still, lone lake among far-off mountains. The second threw on his canvas a thundering waterfall, with a fragile birch tree bending over the foam; at the fork of a branch, almost wet with the cataract’s spray, a robin sat on its nest. The first was only Stagnation; the last was Rest. For in rest there are two elements—tranquility and energy; silence and turbulence; creation and destruction; fearfulness and fearlessness.

- Henry Drummond

“Chaos is what we've lost touch with. This is why it is given a bad name. It is feared by the dominant archetype of our world, which is Ego, which clenches because its existence is defined in terms of control.”

- Terrance McKenna

WEEK 3 || BROKENESS

WEEKLY FAST: SWEETS

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

- John 6:1-14

"We are to meet and move through suffering without shock and surprise, without denial of our sorrow and weakness, without resentment or paralyzing fear, yet also without acquiescence or capitulation, without surrender or despair."

- Tim Keller

"How does God's grace engage your sufferings? We may know the right answer. And yet we don't know it. It is a hard answer. But we make it sound like a pat answer. God sets about a long slow answering. But we try to make it a quick fix. His answer insists on being lived out over time and into the particulars. We act as if just saying the right words makes it so. God's answer insists on changing you into a different kind of person. But we act as if some truth, principle, strategy, or perspective might simply be incorporated into who we already are. God personalizes his answer on hearts with an uncanny flexibility. But we turn it into a formula: 'If you just believe _____. If you just do _____. If you just remember _____.' No important truth ever contains the word 'just' in the punch line. How does God's grace meet you in your sufferings? We can make the right answer sound old hat, but I guarantee this: God will surprise you. He will make you stop. You will struggle. He will bring you up short. You will hurt. He will take his time. You will grow in faith and in love. He will deeply delight you. You will find the process harder than you ever imagined—and better. Goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life (Ps. 23:6). No matter how many times you've heard it, no matter how long you've known it, no matter how well you can say it, God's answer will come to mean something better than you could ever imagine."

- David Powlison

In Genesis, God brings order out of darkness and chaos.

God – we invite you into the emptiness, void, darkness, and chaos of our lives. Where things have fallen apart – we invite you in!

We need order, beauty, design – we invite you into the chaos.

It's dark and God speaks light.

Into relationships that are hurtful and confusing - turn the lights on so that we can see what's really going on. Help us to see what's behind our pain, our motives, and our actions. In the areas that are dark – we need light.

At the end of the creation story – God rested.

We invite you into our worry, anxiety, stress, and exhaustion. We ask humbly for a spirit of Sabbath, of rest. We want the same creative, dynamic power that brought the universe into being unleashed inside of us.

Help us to love in grace and peace – for all who need it.

Amen.

WEEK 4 || HEALING

WEEKLY FAST: CAFFEINE

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

- John 6:16-25

Lined area for reflection and response.

Because we experience true life is through faith – I invite you now in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit to receive him as the sin forgiving, transforming treasure of your life. May we not whistle past the graveyard, but engage the brokenness- even our own. May the Lord grant you to be freed from the power and mastery of sin in your life. And may you, on the path of a new direction, find the inheritance of eternal life – by grace - through faith.

WEEK 5 || SOLITUDE

WEEKLY FAST: MUSIC

2 Early in the morning he came again to the temple.

All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought

a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst 4 they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" 6 This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring

against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 7 And as they continued to ask

him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 And once more he bent down and wrote on

the ground. 9 But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus

was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned

you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

- John 8:2-11

Lined area for reflection and response.

JESUS AND SOLITUDE

- *Solitude at the beginning of ministry
(Mt 4:1-2)
- *Solitude before choosing disciples
(Lk 6:12-13)
- *Solitude at the death of John Baptist
(Mt 14:10-13)
- *Solitude at the pressure of popularity
(Mt 14:23)
- *Solitude at the daily demands of life
(Luke 5:15-16)
- *Solitude before significant events
(Mt 17:1-3)
- *Solitude before facing death
(Mt. 26:36)

What becomes visible here is that solitude molds self-righteous people into gentle, caring, forgiving persons who are so deeply convinced of their own great sinfulness and so fully aware of God's even greater mercy that their life itself becomes ministry. Solitude begins with a time and place for God, and Him alone. If we really believe not only that God exists, but that He is actively present in our lives--healing, teaching, and guiding--we need to set aside a time and space to give Him our undivided attention."

- Henri Nouwen

WEEK 6 || COMMUNITY

WEEKLY FAST: SHOPPING

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

- John 9:1-17

Lined area for reflection and response.

The "One Others" of the New Covenant

Love one another
Serve one another
Accept one another
Strengthen one another
Help one another
Encourage one another
Care for one another
Forgive one another
Submit to one another
Commit to one another
Build Trust with one another
Be Devoted to one another
Be Patient with one another
Be Interested in one another
Be Accountable to one another
Confess to one another
Live in Harmony with one another
Don't be Conceited with one another
Don't Pass Judgment with one another
Don't Slander one another
Instruct one another
Greet one another
Admonish one another
Spur one another on
Meet with one another
Agree with one another
Be Concerned with one another
Be Humble with one another
Be Compassionate with one another
Do not be Consumed with one another
Do not be Angry with one another
Do not Lie to one another
Do not Grumble with one another
Give Preference to one another
Be at Peace with one another
Sing to one another
Be of the same mind with one another
Comfort one another
Be kind to one another
Live in Peace with one another
Carry one another's burdens

“In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald’s [Tolkien’s] reaction to a specifically Charles joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him “to myself” now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald...In this, Friendship exhibits a glorious “nearness by resemblance” to heaven itself where the very multitude of the blessed (which no man can number) increases the fruition which each of us has of God. For every soul, seeing Him in her own way, doubtless communicates that unique vision to all the rest. That, says an old author, is why the Seraphim in Isaiah’s vision are crying ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ to one another (Isaiah 6:3). The more we thus share the Heavenly Bread between us, the more we shall have.”

- CS Lewis

"If the ways of God in Scripture didn't always make sense and everything in your life does, then perhaps you've not really given God control."

- Jon Ransdell

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Lined area for reflection and response.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

- John 13:1-20

God, You who generously give to all your creatures, satisfy our thirst and hunger not for drink and bread alone but for love, truth, justice and peace through your gift of the Eucharist.

Jesus, in the breaking of the bread in the Eucharist, we remember your suffering and we acknowledge the hungers of so many in this world. Through our sharing in the Bread of Life, open our hearts to the needs of all. May this Bread become the bread of hope, of peace, of abundance for everyone on this Earth.

Holy Spirit, may the Blood of Christ we share renew us and energize us to be true communities of light amid the darkness of the structures of sin and injustice in the world today. Christ's sacrifice gives us new life and nourishes our souls so we can hear and respond to your discerning call.

As we are called to the table of the Eucharist, let us in turn call our brothers and sisters to the table where we can all share the resources of Creation, where Justice and Peace reign, and where Love transforms human souls and earthly structures so life and goodness can flourish. Amen.

-Education for Justice

GOOD FRIDAY

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. 3 They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." 8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. 9 He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

12 From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." 13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." 16 So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

- John 19:1-16

“The executioner laid the crossbeam behind Jesus and brought Him to the ground quickly by grasping His arm and pulling Him backward. As soon as Jesus fell, the beam was fitted under the back of His neck and, on each side, soldiers quickly knelt on the inside of the elbows...The thorns pressed against His torn scalp...With his right hand, the executioner probed the wrist of Jesus to find the little hollow spot. When he found it, he took one of the square-cut iron nails...raised the hammer over the nail head and brought it down with force...two soldiers grabbed each side of the crossbeam and lifted. As they pulled up, they dragged Jesus by the wrists. With every breath, He groaned. When the soldiers reached the upright, the four of them began to list the crossbeam higher until the feet of Jesus were off the ground. The body must have writhed with pain...When the crossbeam was set firmly, the executioner...knelt before the cross. Two soldiers hurried to help, and each one took hold of a leg at the calf. The ritual was to nail the right foot over the left, and this was probably the most difficult part of the work. If the feet were pulled downward, and nailed close to the foot of the cross, the prisoner always died quickly. Over the years, the Romans learned to push the feet upward on the cross, so that the condemned man could lean on the nails and stretch himself upward [to breathe].

-Jim Bishop

HOLY SATURDAY

So they took Jesus, 17 and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20 Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, 24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, 25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

- John 19:17-30

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Scot McKnight

EASTER SUNDAY!

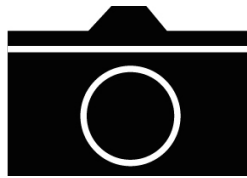
Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. 4 Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

- John 20:11-18

"On the third day the friends of Christ coming at daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realized the new wonder; but even they hardly realized that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but of the dawn."

- GK Chesterton



LENT