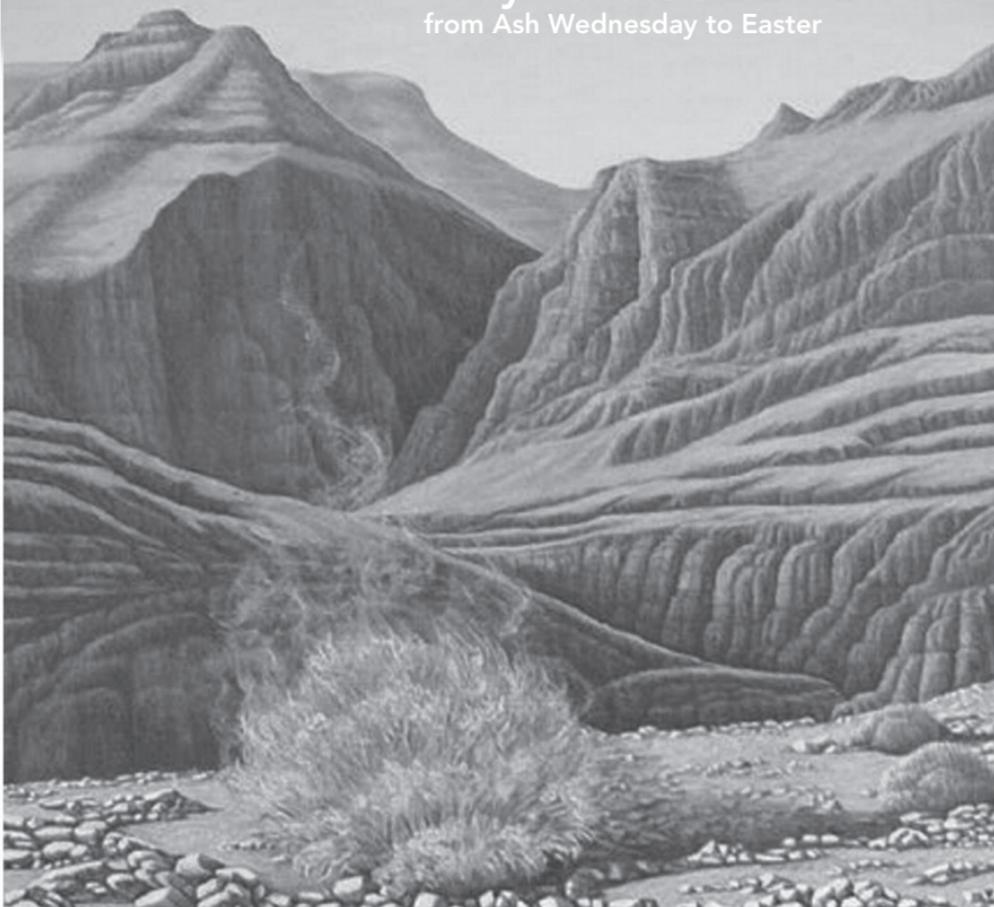


# AWAKENING TO WITNESS

Daily Reflections

from Ash Wednesday to Easter



The Cathedral of St George the Martyr, Cape Town

## INTRODUCTION

---

Mary Oliver, the celebrated North American poet, in her eulogy to her life-long partner Molly Cook, reflects on “the notion of attention” such as in “the way the swallow plays in the golden air of summer.” The days of the Season of Lent can dispose us to alertness to the details of the neglected aspects of our lives. This can range from friends whom we have lost touch with over the years to that of our struggles to pray, to love. To forgive.

This booklet is a collection of reflections from a diverse gathering of people: Those of deep faith, some who negotiate the borderlands of agnosticism or those who feast on the slight, infrequent slivers of the luminous. All share a desire which is that of longing to find a way to that place in life akin to bliss, peace of mind. To be accepted without qualification or demand and to arrive at that place in life which we will know as home.

Each contributor has studied a text and their insights are grounded in their own experience and life struggle. By an understanding of how God is present, or absent, in their lives. A few are theologians skilled in the ways of garnering meaning from sacred texts. Many though are lay persons qualified by a simple commitment to live with an awareness of people and nature. The world co-lives with Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and those who claim no formal attachment to organised religion.

May we bow the knee of our heart respectfully to the godliness of our neighbour and the strangers who challenge us to be the gospel to them. But in so doing may we *Awaken* to *Witness* to the one who asks of us, “and who do you say I am?”

**Michael Weeder**

Dean of The Cathedral of St George the Martyr  
Cape Town

## ASH WEDNESDAY

---

Lent is a time to retreat from daily pressures and recoup our strength in order to be reconciled to God, our neighbour and our environment. Today we climb the first rung of the ladder on our Lenten journey, focussed on the passion, death, resurrection and glorification of our Lord Jesus, marked with ashes made from the palms with which we welcomed Christ on Palm Sunday.

We are called to embody acts of selflessness for others and for our planet, to wrestle with what is bad and brings death, and to embrace what is good and brings life. As you are marked with the sign of the Cross on your forehead and hear the words, "turn away from sin and believe the good news", may this act indelibly mark you as a true witness of Christ in both word and action. May your fear be turned to courage, your distrust to trust.

May the outward signing of our foreheads transform our inner beings, renew our courage, our hope and our determination to know Jesus - what pains him and what pleases him. Let us be vigilant, let us learn to discern and

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Ps 51:1-17;  
2 Cor 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

---

read about, and get to know the context in which we live. Let us use Lent to strengthen ourselves individually but also learn to work as a collective.

Over and above the daily bible lessons for this Lent, I recommend an accessible book edited by Dean Stroud called *Preaching in Hitler's Shadow*. It's a compilation of sermons of resistance in the Third Reich. Use this book and Lent readings to be strengthened as individuals and as a collective, to root out from the world and from our country those structures and ways and beliefs which are not life-giving, especially religious extremism.

Pledge this Lent to know Jesus in all of your life and act accordingly. What one pledge and act of witness for the common good will you pursue this Lent?

*Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new,  
late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was  
outside, and it was there that I searched for you.*

**Thabo Makgoba** is the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA)

## THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

---

*Psalm 1 verses 1ff: "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night."*

Psalm 1 suggests that there exists a clear dichotomy between the "righteous" and the "ungodly" or, alternatively put, between the righteous and the unrighteous as if we are dealing with two distinct groups of people. As if people can be categorized clearly as either righteous or unrighteous. One is therefore either righteous or ungodly.

What is clear is that there is a constant universal battle between righteousness and unrighteousness. It is the way in which the world and the inhabitants of the earth function – there is goodness and there is evil; there is compassion and there is exploitation; there is justice and there is injustice. The question is: where is the battle waged – is it really between two distinct groups of people (i.e. the righteous and the unrighteous)?

It is palpably clear that this battle exists in each one of us. The seeds of righteous behaviour and unrighteous behaviour both grow within our very being. Those of us who are righteous today may behave completely differently tomorrow. Herein lies the need for spiritual grace and constant prayerful engagement with ourselves. It is critical for each one of us who seek righteousness to be vigilant, prayerful, reflective and resolute in our attempts to live righteously.

*In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all.*

**Courtney Sampson** is Provincial Electoral Officer of the Western Cape and an Anglican priest born in Paarl.

## THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

---

*Luke 16 : 19 -31: "There was a rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores."*

Rich and poor, the named and the unnamed, the seeing and the not seeing, actions and consequences, death and the after- life, reversal of hierarchies, the bearers of God's message and truths on earth. These are all the ideas suggested by this passage which deals with one of the biggest issues in the world – socio-economic inequalities and dire poverty. Every day we are presented with a choice as to whether we see or not, whether we act or not. In the Hindu faith, what we have in this life (the goodness and the suffering) has been the consequence of previous lives – the soul is on a long journey and faces rebirth until it reaches its full potential and the cycle of rebirth ends. The goal of all human beings is thus to live good lives so that the soul can be set free. The rich man's soul will be earth

bound by suffering until better choices are made. So what actions can we take? Gandhi suggested a way for daily guidance: 'Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following expedient. Recall the face of the poorest and most helpless man [woman ] you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her].' Begin to see. Listen. Act. Poverty has a name and a face.

*Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those people throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands, this day, their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give them peace and Joy. Amen*

**Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie** is Professor of History, University of the Western Cape.

## FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

---

*Matthew 25 verses 34 - 36: "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."*

The point of our scripture reading for today reminds me of an ancient legend about one of the early saints. St. Lawrence was one of seven deacons in the church at Rome, in the middle of the 2nd century. Rome, surrounded on every side by threatening enemies, and in a near state of financial collapse, desperately needed money to finance its armies. According to this legend, a high official in Rome demanded that Lawrence hand over the treasure of the church. In response, Lawrence assembled all the poor people, to whom he had already given away the possessions of the church, before the Roman official, and he stretched out his hand to them and said, "*These are the*

*treasures of the church."* The Roman official was so infuriated that he slowly roasted Lawrence to death on a gridiron.

I've always found today's scripture reading particularly sobering and challenging. The passage does not direct our attention so much to the future, as it does to the present, and the ways in which we respond to Christ in the present. The point of our passage is not that Christ is merely present in an indefinite future. Instead, the message is that Christ is here in the present with us, but too often we fail to recognize Him.

## FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

---

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote this about Christ, *"He goes incognito as a beggar among beggars, as an outcast among the outcast, despairing among the despairing, dying among the dying"*.

I think Mother Teresa of Calcutta expresses it best when she says, *"In the Eucharist I see Christ in the appearance of bread. In the slums, I see Christ in the distressing disguise of the poor. The Eucharist and the poor are but one love for me. Only in heaven will we see how much we owe to the poor for helping us to love God better because of them"*.

The Incognito Christ is present among us in the guise of the poor, the suffering, the marginalized and the alienated. If we would follow Him today, we must take our place among them.

*You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.*

**Vicentia Kgabe** is the Rector of College of the Transfiguration (residential training college for Anglican clergy), Grahamstown. South Africa.

## SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

---

*John 12 verses 24 ff: "...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

Recently, I visited a very sick, old man. He had suffered a stroke and lives with his family who fail to care for him. But they prevent him from entering a frail care facility as they need his pension. He depends on the kindness of the neighbours to provide some comfort and food.

The suffering of this old man and the suffering of Christ horrifies me. I question why the old man has had to suffer so deplorably. But I know there was a greater purpose to Christ's suffering and death.

Christ's suffering orients us not to what is, but to what is possible. God has transformed our world before, and God is continuing to do so through our hearts and hands and feet. We live as people mindful of our responsibility

to transform those cesspools of injustice, those deserts of despair, into wellsprings of a reimagined reality where the values of God's kingdom is made manifest.

Instead of asking why God allows pain and senseless suffering, I ask myself the question, "what is God calling me to do in this situation." Instead of wallowing in helpless resignation, I am moved to act in ways that will mirror the reign of God, here on earth as it is in heaven.

*Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you.*

**Richard Cogill** is a priest on the staff of St George's Cathedral, Cape Town.

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

---

*Genesis 9 verse 13ff: "I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth... I will remember my covenant...and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."*

One is haunted these days by the images of water, water everywhere as floods gutter our neighbouring states of Mozambique and Malawi, and further away, Madagascar. Whenever these raging agents of death visit at about the same time every year, it is always as if 'we did not know...', unprepared, never ready for the avalanche. With it the brittle forms of housing, fields under water and crops never to be recovered, of livestock swept away to their deaths, humanity piled in misery, and what belongings they had vanished, and many die.

There are some things worth remembering about the story of the flood. One, is that it was deliberate and it was a planned intervention by God in human affairs. Secondly, there is a mechanism for salvation built into the divine deed, and finally, it was in God's plan that the waters would subside – destroy, yes, but also to become symbols of life and a new beginning.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's sublime and haunting poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, suggests that although in the midst of apparent plenty, if it cannot save a life, then it is illusory and a "mere shadow of the imagination." The overture to Handel's Water Music likewise is able to lift the imagination onto higher ideals of the imagination and a lived life, something that Samuel Taylor Coleridge calls, "the suspension of disbelief for the moment."

In the midst of the destruction by the raging floods, or the gentle drip or sprinkling of the waters of baptism at the font that touches the forehead of a screaming baby, there is a sign of the covenant of restoration and hope that prays to God "for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1Peter 3:21) or in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's words for the dear Lord who loveth us. He made and loveth all.

*O Christ, our Morning Star, splendour of Light Eternal,  
shining with the glory of the rainbow, come and waken us  
from the greyness of our apathy, and renew in us your gift  
of hope. Amen.*

**N Barney Pityana** was a founding member of the South African Students' Organisation and was a close associate of Steve Biko. Barney, an Anglican priest, is a former Rector of the College of the Transfiguration, 2011-2014.

## MONDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Leviticus 19 verse 16: "You shall not stand over the blood of your fellow man."*

In the United States some people are working to end the killing of unarmed black people by the police. We have no reason to believe this is possible.

It isn't simply about poverty or crime in the U.S. We have story after story of white people armed and clearly out of their minds whom the police appropriately detain with no loss of life. We even see appropriate, effective policing in the skilled de-escalation and capture of mass murderers. A plague upon our gun addled nation.

And, yet, in 2014 a 12 year old boy named Tamir Rice with a toy gun in a public park is shot by the police and left to die at the feet of two police officers who do nothing to help save his life. They detained his 14 year old sister who rushed to his aid.

It is like Leviticus 19:16 – and you have to hope in life that things are rarely like Leviticus. Who needs to be told not to stand and watch a life leak out of a body? Apparently, we do.

The gospels tell us that there is a kingdom prepared from the foundations of the world. It awaits those who see suffering and cannot help but try to soothe it. God seeks to be in eternity with those whose hearts break easily and who in foolishness stand with the prisoner, the naked, and the hungry, despite the clear lessons of history. Maybe it is God's self merely seeking unity with itself, the creating one in love with those who love their fellow creatures. Maybe this is all we are created to be.

*May the power of God this day enable me, the nakedness of God disarm me, the beauty of God silence me, the justice of God give me voice.*

**Winnie Varghese** is an Episcopalian priest and Rector of St. Mark's in the Bowery, New York, NY, USA

## MONDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Leviticus 19 verse 18: "...you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord."*

The passage from Leviticus paraphrases and expands the Decalogue (Ten Commandments); Psalm 19 eulogises the Law of the Lord; the Matthew passage is Jesus' exegesis on the spirit, rather than the letter of the Law.

If we follow and act upon the Law of the Lord, can we go wrong? Yet there is more! Jesus all but spells out disaster for those who fail to recognise our sister or brother in those who need our compassionate ministry – in fact, says our Lord, we would be failing to recognise Himself!

There is an overwhelming need for ministry in our South African society today. Poverty, joblessness, homelessness, HIV/AIDS – the list is endless. People are desperate for ministry. Clearly our Lord is calling upon us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

*May the integrity of God hold me, the desire of God move me, the fear of God expose me to the truth, the breath of God give me abundant life.*

**Bob Barton** is a retired Systems Analyst/Programmer with a lively interest in Anglican liturgy. He holds a certificate in Bible Skills from the University of Stellenbosch.

## TUESDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34:1-8; Matt 6: 7-15*

The created order reflects the greatness, the splendour and the Fatherhood of God, the Provider and Sustainer.

His name, Jehovah (Yahweh), shows his greatness and mightiness and transcendence and immanence amongst all the created order.

Because God is the Provider, it is only befitting to hallow (honour) His name. He needs to be praised.

Because he is mighty and powerful He makes himself accessible to those who humble themselves before Him.

Seeking Him in earnest, through repentance God not only opens the door for forgiveness but also blesses the penitent. He delivers his people from every oppressive condition and circumstance for His Word is dynamic – which accomplishes His will.

He lifts the burdens of those heavy-laden; the spiritually and materially poor – some such as abused women, children or the drug addicted!

He provides food and blessings in due season to those who trust in Him. He grants that most wonderful gift of peace, prosperity and harmony (shalom) to those who honour and seek Him.

Therefore we can only approach Him in a spirit of humility, awe, praise and wonder, exalting His Name as this befits His majesty! He rules as good Lord and King over all the created order from generation to generation.

*You took my extravagance, and asked for passion; you took my self-absorption, and created insight.*

**Henry Mbaya** is an Assistant priest at St. Mary's-on-the-Braak and Senior Lecturer in Missiology, Stellenbosch University.

## WEDNESDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

**Jonah 3 verse 1-10:** *“The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, ‘Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.’”*

In this picture, it is not Jonah who comes to ‘The word of the Lord’, but it is the word of the Lord that has the humility to come to him. It appears as if there is a tenacity and faithfulness about God’s word and about revelation. It has an eternal and convicting way of coming around to human beings.

Authentic belief is always accompanied by actions. In mature spirituality, words and deeds are true siblings. This is what the people of Nineveh evolve into. Jonah finds the courage to articulate God’s message. Nineveh finds the heart and the ears to hear and act. Great and small became united in common spiritual practices. Uniformity, at its best, dislodges self-centred and self-serving egos giving God a chance to be experienced.

Humbly, profound, and perhaps as an invitation, God changes God's mind about Nineveh and her people. Authentic conversion is almost always never one-way. Moreover, conversion, in its Greek root, means to have the courage, coeur, the heart and grace to go beyond the mind you're in. In this picture this is what God, Jonah and all in Nineveh do.

*Spirit of Truth whom the world can never grasp, touch our hearts with the shock of your coming; fill us with desire for your disturbing peace; and fire us with longing to speak your uncontainable word, through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Rus Blossoples** is the Rector of St Stephens Pinelands in the Diocese of Saldanha Bay.

## THURSDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*2 Kings 20 verse 5b: "I have heard your prayers and seen your tears. I will heal you"*

Powerful words of the intervention, the involvement of God in the lives of people. These words are spoken to Hezekiah, words that he longed to hear although he must have felt so unworthy. After all, he was reminded (earlier in the chapter) that he was not so invincible after all. Not to forget the threats of the Assyrians. All this in the midst of faltering ego and position; human frailty - all too much to bear. Then still the prophet warns him: "Get ready to die"; how much deeper the despair?

How bitterly anybody would weep! Tears are taken to God who remembers us with compassion and with

love, often disappointed at our waywardness and the waywardness of this world. Everything so wonderfully created, holding so much promise, yet struggling to become what God intended us to be: made for wholeness and life in abundance. And so we weep! The world weeps: drowns in pain, sorrow, anger, devastation. What are we becoming? Still the world yearns to live, resilient.

*Heal my fragmented soul; teach my naivety; confront my laziness; inflame my longing to know your loving discernment and live out your active love, through Jesus Christ. Amen*

## THURSDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Matt 7 verse 7: "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you."*

Endurance, "the ability to withstand hardship or adversity," is a feature of the human condition. We embody a seed planted deep in each of us, because we are born in the image of Christ. Mary's first-born possessed this quality of "endurance"; the ability to forgive and whose love endures forever.

Lent is a time to attempt to focus on our interior life through prayer and fasting. We reflect on the love of Christ and the example he provides.

Our own lives bring us daily to the foot of the cross of suffering: Our own and that of others. Each one of us has a story to tell. Like Jesus, may we find the courage to tell Jesus' story through our own story and be empowered to say in a new way "I do believe".

Endurance is not an easy task and neither is the journey towards Easter an easy one. As we seek out the wilderness moments and places in life, may we discover the way we are called to live the gospel, to be gospel, good news for others and ourselves.

May we uncover the hidden and blessed depth of our humanity. May the unfolding of the truth of our lives bear witness to the living Christ in all the ways and parts of life where the Spirit of God will lead us.

*You are home to the exile. Touch to the frozen. Daylight to the prisoner. Authority to the silent. Anger to the helpless. Laughter to the weary. Direction to the joyful: Come our God come.*

**Mxolisi R. Sotshononda** is a priest on the staff of St George's Cathedral, Cape Town.

## GEORGE HERBERT, PRIEST AND POET

---

*Psalm 130 verses 1, 2, 5 and 6: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."*

The Church commemorates the English priest and poet George Herbert. What a difference there is in tone between Herbert's gentle affirmative Christian voice, best known to many of us in the hymn "Teach me my God and King" and the passionate cry of the writer of Psalm 130 set for today's readings.

But is the message so different? The title Herbert gave to his poem is 'The Elixir': meaning, in this poem, belief in God that makes all experiences, however ordinary, divine. (In my more discontented moments I have taken comfort in the lines, "who sweeps a room as for thy laws, / makes that and the action fine'!) But Herbert does not assume we have reached that state of grace. "Teach me my God and King, / in all things thee to see; / and what I do in anything / to do it as for thee." This is an aspiration.

In many ways, in our troubled times, the psalmist's voice speaks to us more powerfully: *"Out of the depths have I called unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: .... My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."*

Here is a plea for reassurance which we can share. Where is God, we may ask in the darkness of the night, when children are used as human explosives? Where was God when I hurt someone I care for? Where is God when I feel dry and emptied of faith?

Yet the psalmist's lesson is about learning to live with the darkness, when we are most troubled by doubts and anxieties. If you, Lord, he says, held all our weaknesses against us, where would we be? "For with the Lord there is mercy." What the psalmist and the poet both offer us are hope and encouragement to trust that the dawn will come:

*"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."*

**Mary Bock** has been a member of St George's Cathedral since 1973. She is an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Cape Town.

## FRIDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Matthew 5 verse 24: "... leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God."*

Some Pharisees were reputed to have walked about with their eyes closed so as not to be tempted by anything that they saw around them! In this reading we are reminded that righteousness has to be achieved in the rough and tumble of life - by engaging open-eyed with the challenges of the world, not by avoiding them. It includes dealing generously with people who annoy and irritate us; with our temptation to be judgemental of those whose actions we find offensive; with those who fail to do what we believe to be the right thing.

We are reminded of the nuances of wrongdoing and injustice. While the ten commandments of Moses clearly define the broad and absolute categories of the cardinal sins against God and humanity, we are required to consider

all of the implications tacit in them. In contemporary terms I suppose it could translate into considering both the spirit and the letter of the law. Also the spirit within us. In recent years we have become very attuned to the impact of unhappiness, sorrow and resentment on our physical health and wellbeing. Harboursing negativity can fester and weaken physical immunity. Letting go of resentments and cultivating a right spirit within us is an act of healing both for ourselves and those who might be the recipients of such generosity of spirit.

*O God of all, save us from the sin of forgetfulness of your goodness.*

**Michael Weeder** is Dean of The Cathedral of St George the Martyr, Cape Town.

## FRIDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 130 verses 5, 6: "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning."*

I inhabit a wilderness in which to be associated with a faith tradition increasingly entangles one with the hideous and the perverted, the unloving and the unforgiving – from homophobic clerics to misogynist congregations to those who strap suicide vests onto the living flesh of children. Those same faith traditions maintain a near-resolute silence as we turn the planet that sustains us all into another wilderness, flinging the gifts of creation, despoiled and looted, back in the face of miracles.

At the same time, the liturgies and cycles of the Christian year are embedded in me. There is what the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins calls "carrion comfort" knowing that Lent encompasses one of the periods allotted for despair, mourning and alienation in the calendar of Christianity.

That faith allows for loss of faith, for disillusion, for the humility of uncertainty, for brokenness, is one of its redeeming and most mysterious qualities. And whatever the progression of Lent through Passover, passion and resurrection may mean theologically, it is still a narrative of impossible forgiveness. May we have the strength to forgive ourselves and each other as a species.

*My heart was wilderness and I heard your voice; my grief  
divided me and you held me close;  
Bitterness consumed me and you overflowed with trust; I  
longed to be with you and you let me stay.*

**Helen Moffett** is a writer, poet, activist, editor and academic who lives in Cape Town.

## SATURDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Matthew 5 verses 43, 44: “You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”*

As an educator I'm drawn to the pedagogical possibilities of how William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' mirrors the complexity of a society in conflict, struggling to reach agreement on the appropriate rules for co-existence in the face of life-threatening challenges.

Religious 'truths' depend largely on faith but in the gospel of Matthew 5:43-48, the message of righteousness in a time of strife is spread as more than just 'the word'. There is a clear divine appeal for reasoning in dealing with one's enemy that is about building an inner resilience, what Muslims refer to as 'jihad', at a time when a lust for mob justice, bullying and public displays of retribution against sinners is rife. Martin Luther King's "Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can" reflects this counterintuitive need to embrace one's enemy

without becoming that which harms others. It speaks to ending a cycle of violence and bigotry.

For me human rights are indivisible and raise wonderful possibilities for coexistence if applied to all 'neighbours and enemies', across differences of class, race, gender, ability, sexuality, nationality and religion. This does not imply the eradication of difference but rather that difference is part of the human condition.

*God our deliverer, raise up the poor and comfort the betrayed, through the one who for our sakes became poor and whose betrayal brought our salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Mandy Sanger** facilitates education for the District Six Museum with a special emphasis on issues of memory, anti-racism and social justice.

## SATURDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT

---

*Deuteronomy 26 verse 17: You have declared today that the LORD is your God. And you have promised to walk in his ways, and to obey his decrees, commands, and regulations, and to do everything he tells you.*

The covenant between God and Israel is affirmed. It is affirmed "today", and is reaffirmed every time it is read or heard "today". It is as binding on God's people in the 21st century as it was on the Israelites. The covenant is binding on the Christian community that I participate in, on my family, and on myself. The challenge of being a 21st century Christian is that many of the decrees, commands, and regulations listed in Deuteronomy carry little relevance in a technologically advanced world. Those that remain relevant for "today" are often those that speak to wholeness in relationship and to living well in community: these I need to obey.

"Today", or "this day" (TNIV), says the time of preparation is over; the covenant is active. It is time to fulfil our obligations and obedience is required. Obedience is a consequence of choosing to belong, although it is rarely easy. I have embraced the Christian faith and the Christian community, and in so doing I have embraced the covenant between God and the Israelites, between God and God's people; and God and God's people have embraced me. I belong, and I will listen, and I will walk in God's ways; I will obey. Oh, my God, I want to love you.

*O loving Creator, you have granted me the gift of baptism,  
grace me with your Spirit to walk the path of faith.*

**Mark Long** is Rector of St Andrew's Church, Newlands in the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

---

**Matthew 10 verse 39:** *“Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”*

As children, when we found something useful or beautiful we wanted to keep it, even if the owner would eventually turn up and claim whatever it is we had found. We would refute that claim with a word of common wisdom: “Finders keepers, losers weepers.” That closes the argument, because that is conventional wisdom and therefore true. We built our lives around such logic. Here however, Jesus turns that piece of wisdom around. If you try to find your life, cling to it, hang onto it at all costs, you will lose it. But if you lose it, sacrifice it for my sake, you will find it.

Jesus is no different. His whole life and ministry is a proclamation of this inverted order God brings into the world. The poor receive good news, the rich hear “Woe unto you!” We are not blessed when we have great wealth; instead we are blessed when we are reviled and hated, defamed and cursed.

Gen 17:1-7, 15-16; Ps 22:23-32;  
Rom 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

---

The passage is not about dying. It is about living. But it's about living a life that I have given up trying to control, keep, and safeguard. It means giving up my life the way I want it, or planned it. We want such a life: planned, safe, ordered, secure, peace with minimal risk. Jesus says, if we cling to that life we will lose it. If we are willing to lose it for his sake, we will find it. But Jesus talks about a life filled with betrayal, struggle and persecution, fraught with danger.

But if we choose this life, for his sake, we will keep it: it will be secured in a love too deep, a mercy too wide, a grace too endless to describe, for the One who said, "those who lose their life will find it", is also the One who said, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

*May I always remember, Lord, that I am your child.*

**Allan Boesak** is Professor of Theology and Desmond Tutu Chair of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Studies, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis USA.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

---

**Romans 4:** *“For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.”*

Romans 4: 13-25 tells us a story about a man who trusted in the will of God. When his body was as good as dead and Sarah’s womb was unresponsive, Abraham trusted in “God’s will” and grounded his faith in a gracious God.

Reading this text has made me contemplate reconciliation in our country. When I hear that more than 70% of people in our country are Christians, I ask myself why then South Africans continue to associate with racism, injustices, inequality, violence against women, poverty and other forms of injustice.

As a young South African, I ask myself did the church trust in God’s will for reconciliation or did the church trust in the will of man - our politicians.

Who is it that the church trusted for the promise of reconciliation? Abraham trusted in the promise made to

Gen 17:1-7, 15-16; Ps 22:23-32;  
Rom 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

---

him by God because he knew it was firm and reliable. He trusted in the word of God for it is power.

Abraham left everything he knew for the fulfilment of God's promise. The church needs to realise that when we leave everything and trust God's will we receive God's promises.

*Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity. Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech. Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness and a home to the stranger. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility. (Bahai' Prayer for Peace)*

**Lerato Kobe** is a postgraduate student at the University of the Western Cape, in the Faculty of Arts, at the Department of Religion and Theology.

## MONDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*Daniel 9 verse 4: "I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession."*

In a difficult time such as today, God metes out punishment on his people. Daniel responds in prayer, praising God, invoking His power and might, and His covenant of love with those who love Him. He confesses the wickedness and sins of his people; their refusal to listen to God's messengers; their abandoning of His ways which has resulted in their suffering. The prayer is both personal and corporate – Daniel prays and repents for his failings and those of his community trusting God to keep his covenant.

On reflection I become aware of the wickedness in my heart and in the community we live. In these modern times it is easy to believe that we don't need God; that we have the power to change the world through our thoughts,

actions and money. We use our words to destroy, to put down, to lie. We become overwhelmed and say, “God does not care. How can he let this happen.” Our hearts are hard.

Daniel reminds us that in times like these we, as a people, should humble ourselves before our Great and Mighty God. We should confess our sins, invoke His covenant with us, and trust that He will soften our hearts and forgive us.

*O Breath that is holy at home in my soul, inspire me to seek you in the chapel of my heart. Enable me to see your face I will meet this day.*

**Philippa Kabali-Kagwa** is a Ugandan South African poet, storyteller, coach and facilitator.

## TUESDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*Isaiah 1 verses 16, 17: “ ... remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”*

The Isaiah reading presents us with a very stark image of an angry God who refuses to accept the offering of His people, and their sacrifice to honour him as their God. Rather God exhorts them with great rigour, to intentional action, which should not only convince those that consider themselves as the chosen tribe, but also those that appear to be out of the circles – the poor, oppressed, orphaned, widowed, marginalised and voiceless; so that all people may know that God is just. And that the greatest sacrifice and offering that God requires is to see that this truth about him is known – to ‘see that Justice is done’.

This is still a rather relevant exhortation for our own church today, as we live in a world, in a country, in a city and in communities where justice is slowly finding itself at the bottom of the pile of social priorities. The church, being the vessel of God, is challenged daily to be

intentional about lifting this priority to the brim of our social concerns – through our ceaseless action wherever we find ourselves, to proclaim this justice of God and proclaim the truth about who God is to God's people.

Like Charles and John Wesley we are challenged to make what we believe in our hearts (the truth about who God is, and what through grace he does for us and for all), known by all people. By that, we certainly present ourselves before God and the whole world, as those that seek to serve God faithfully and meaningfully in word and deed.

*Grant me humility, O Breath of God, to be faithful when praise distracts me from serving you, from bowing the knee of my heart to your throne of love.*

**Mkhuseli Lujabe** serves as Curate in The Parish of St George the Martyr, Silvertown, Athlone in the Diocese of Cape Town.

## WEDNESDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*Jeremiah 18 verse 18: "Then they said, "Come, let's make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not cease, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us attack him with our tongue and pay no attention to anything he says."*

The prophetic voice of the South African church is sometimes seen as a threat to those in power. This voice is firmly rooted in the Godly principle of justice to all. The prophetic church does not hesitate to ask difficult questions regarding unjust enrichment, the wide economic gap between the rich and the poor, corruption and the inadequate delivery of basic services.

This voice causes discomfort to those who prevent meaningful transformation and the resurrection of the poor. To manage this discomfort the powerful political establishment ridicules this prophetic voice or ignores it altogether. It also leads to the establishment aligning themselves with those in the church who are intimidated by political power. The political powers then create the

impression that they have the support of the church and that the prophetic voice of the church lacks credibility.

The prophet Jeremiah warns against such a stand. The prophetic voice of the church can and will never be silenced. Jeremiah's own history and the prophetic voice of the church during apartheid South Africa serve as examples. Let us never be fooled into believing that the credibility of those sections in the church who succumb to power will survive the test of time. It is the responsibility of the prophetic church to speak truth to power.

*Teach me, O God, to live in solidarity with those who suffer and not to lose hope in the daily heaven of freedom*

**Deon Snyman** is an ordained minister of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and is the current CEO of the Restitution Foundation.

## WEDNESDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*The Epistle to the Hebrews 13 verse 2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"*

### **A Muslim Perspective**

The above text is one of many Biblical texts that provide the theological foundations for what has been described as the Christian doctrine of 'radical love' of the "Other." A profound teaching indeed!

As a Muslim scholar, I found myself instinctively drawn to begin with a linguistic analysis of this Biblical text. From the vantage point of semantics, it is striking to note that the Greek equivalent of the English "entertain strangers" is *philoxenia*. The first element of the word is *philo*, and refers to love or friendship. Thus, it means more than simple hospitality – it is not a mere sentimental response to the "other," but truly "love for strangers." This Biblical text is therefore literally exhorting its readers to *philoxenia* meaning "love for strangers," as opposed to its antonym *xenophobia*, which translates as "fear or hatred of strangers".

The Biblical teaching is clear - giving hospitality and loving kindness to strangers, who are always to be seen as children of God, even the presence of God – with the consequence

of blessing – establishes itself as a pattern early on in the Jewish tradition, and hence in Christianity. Moreover, the Biblical message is profound - that whenever a stranger presents him/herself to us we are to see them as holy ground and do the distinctive and humane thing, which is to share a meal with them.

The sharing of meals which is at the heart of all of our faiths is what is seen as the way in which God speaks to people through and beyond any barriers that they set up. A theologian has wisely said 'we eat our religion' and that is in many ways literally and profoundly true. By eating together, the truth of God's presence gets itself into us – alternatively, it is an outward sign at least of that inward presence. Can we, Jews, Christians and Muslims work together to recover this aspect of our traditions for the feeding and healing of the world?

*In the darkness of unknowing, when your love seems absent,  
draw near to us, O God.*

**Rashied Omar** is the coordinating Imam at the Claremont Main Road Mosque, Cape Town South Africa. He is also the Coordinator of the Joan B. Kroc Institute's Programme in Religion, Conflict and Peace building, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

## THURSDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*Jeremiah 17 verse 7: "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream."*

Soviet-style communism failed, not because it was intrinsically evil but because it was flawed. It allowed too few people to usurp too much power. Twenty-first century market-capitalism, American-style, will fail for the same reasons. Both are edifices constructed by human intelligence, undone by human nature.

The time has come, the Walrus said. Perhaps things will get worse and then better. Perhaps there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Another world is not

only possible, she's on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.

*O living God, reach through the violence of the proud and the despair of the weak to create in Jesus Christ a people free to praise your holy name, now and forever.*

**Arundhati Roy** is an Indian writer and activist known for her involvement in human rights and environmental causes.

## FRIDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*Genesis 37: 3 - 4; 12 - 28: "... said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him ... and we shall see what will become of his dreams.'"*

The Story of Joseph and his Brothers illustrates how some people are so opposed to dreamers. Joseph is a dreamer that imagines a future that reverses the familial order where his older brothers will no longer have supremacy. This week I saw the film *Selma*, the story of Martin Luther King and others' heroic struggle against white supremacy in America. King articulated the dream to end this supremacy. For having such an imagination he was killed. When I think of the South African freedom struggle, I recall Steve Biko's dream and his death, which resonates with me and many other African-Americans.

What was Martin's dream? Steve Biko's? As Archbishop Desmond would say, "it is the dream of God".

I conclude with this question for us as Christians: how can we develop the same type of courageous imagination to live into the “Dream of God” and confront the evils that exist in our societies and the world?

*O Great Heart of love, grant that our dreams may become the bread that feeds the hungry, lived in the struggle that frees the oppressed and that bring peace in the hearts of all your children.*

**Walter B.A. Brownridge** is Dean of The Cathedral of St. Andrew in The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i.

## FRIDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

**Matthew 21:43:** *“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.”*

My instinctive identification when reading narrative whether it be fictional, news accounts or in this case Biblical text, tends to be with the downtrodden and dispossessed. Black woman in South Africa, 2015 – that’s the lens that I wear.

In this parable in which a landowner lets out arable land to tenants (v33), my empathy does not start off with him, being aware that land is often owned at the expense of others who have been disowned. This particular landowner does not seem to need the land for living, evoking in me a reminder of living in a city where some have second homes while others have none. This clearly was not his primary home, and the fact that the tenants express their intention in killing his son as being to inherit

his land, is indicative of a struggle for the land, albeit misplaced (v38).

The tenant farmers lose my sympathy as they embark on their killing spree (v35-39), and I am forced to focus on the didactical intention of Jesus's parable. The message is clear: the abuse of the trust endowed by God on those from whom much is expected in terms of nurturing and growing justice and care in the world, will be taken away as they have clearly not lived up to glorious expectations. A parable for us all.

*Thank you, God, for the blessings of this day. May I live it without counting the cost of generosity.*

**Bonita Bennett** is an educator, human rights defender, museum director.

## SATURDAY, SECOND WEEK IN LENT

---

*Luke 15 verse 20: So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.*

The father at the centre of this story reflects the qualities of great fatherliness in his recognition (from a distance) of the figure on the horizon. He is driven by deep compassion as he runs towards his son. He plants a kiss on his child's face as he enfolds him in his tender embrace. It is only then that the father hears his son's confession.

The parable's assurance of God's 'awesome' fatherliness towards us, as individuals and as a nation can be compared. For we have sinned, individually and collectively and fallen far short of the opportunity to start afresh after 27th April 1994.

Reaching out in reconciliation is not an option for Christians. It is at the heart of what we believe and what we are called to do. The way has been shown to us by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and the

recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the quest for justice. Our beloved country, her leaders and her people are called today, and every day, to set aside our greed, corruption, selfishness, thoughtlessness, insensitivity, rudeness, relentless pursuit of wealth and the provocations we unwittingly strew on our way.

We are asked to open our eyes to our history, to the truth of how it happened and to what we need to do to rebuild, to repair and to re-unite. It is not for us to blame; it is for us to look inward in our search for what is difficult, painful and unknown and to walk the path of reconciliation, in God's grace.

*Lord, lead us to your heavenly home by single steps of self-restraint and deeds of righteousness; through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Di Oliver** is a parishioner and lay minister at St George's Cathedral, Cape Town. She is a trained Social Worker and a development practitioner.

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

---

*John 2 verse 13: "The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."*

Jesus refused to play by the rules established by those who provide space for orderly dissent, pacifying the need to vent for the marginalized, but designed not to change the power relationships within existing social structures. Like Jesus, to bring about change requires going beyond rules created by the dominant culture, moving beyond what is expected, pushing beyond their universalized experiences. We usually ignore the fact that Jesus is a troublemaker, the bringer of conflict, the disrupter of unity.

History demonstrates the futility of simply denouncing injustices, for those whom society privileges will never willingly abdicate what they consider their birthright. Not all violence is the same. The violence employed by the marginalized to overcome oppression, is in reality self-defence to the oppressor's violent employment of terror to maintain their subjugation. Unconditional love for the very least might lead a person, in an unselfish act,

to stand in solidarity with the oppressed in their battle for self-preservation. Protecting a “non-person” might invite a violent confrontation as the oppressor, feeling backed into a corner, fights tooth and nail to maintain the status quo. The conflict and disruption that comes with following Jesus, whose consequence at times is violence, illustrates the need for an ethical praxis for colonized people that lack the physical or military power to confront or overcome the colonizer. Because the usage of violence all too often becomes the oppressor’s excuse to unleash greater violent retaliation; a need to be wise as serpents but gentle as doves is required.

*From your royal throne, O God, you sent your living Word to pierce the gloom of oppression; so, in our soul’s night, come with your saving help and penetrate our darkness with the rays of your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Miguel A. De La Torre** is professor of Social Ethics at the Iliff School of Theology and past president of the Society of Christian Ethics.

## MONDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Matthew 5 verses 10ff: "Blessed are those ..."*

The sermon on the mount or the beatitudes is the first sermon Christ preached after His baptism. One would have thought that this side of our Lord's desert experience He would preach and proclaim an easier blessedness, one without pain and suffering and persecution. At first glance Christ seems to be bent on having us understand that suffering is part of our faith journey. Does the incarnation of Christ not bring us freedom and light and life and the good life free from pain and suffering?

Yes, the incarnation of our Lord brought us light and life and freedom but these three verses in our Lord's first sermon are far more about relationships, about right living with our neighbours, even when they cause us suffering. It is about being a living witness to the generation we live in.

Our response to kingdom suffering is part of our witness and faith journey.

And when we endure these afflictions for the kingdom of heaven's sake we join the long line of saints through the ages who bore witness to our Lord in word, deed and body.

*I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.*

**Allan Goliath** is a priest on the staff of St George's Cathedral, Cape Town in the Diocese of Cape Town.

## TUESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 25 verses 4, 5: "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long."*

Psalm 25: 3-9 is a call and prayer to ask God to show us the path of righteousness, in the sure knowledge that the knowledge does not come from us, but from God. It also asks God to remember us according to his love, not our sins.

If we are willing to look, we see the sins of the world everywhere in daily reports of injustice, in the ongoing spiritual, mental and material effects of this country's past. If we are willing to look, we can also see where we are complicit in perpetuating these sins - systems of injustice - in other words where we sin. As Xochitl-Alvizo states: "It is not easy to *choose* to see. There is a responsibility and a burden of accountability that comes with *seeing*...

However, it is an imperative of justice that we, indeed, *see*.”  
Yet seeing is not enough, we need the liberation theology  
injunction: See. Think. Act.

If we are willing to see, and think and act, God provides us  
with avenues to forgive our past mistakes, our complicity,  
to find what is right (and just) and walk in his ways which  
are ‘Loving and Faithful’.

*Free us, God of mercy, from all that keeps us from you;  
relieve the misery of the anxious and the ashamed and fill  
us with the hope of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Emma Arogundade** is an educator and a member of St George’s  
Cathedral, Cape Town.

## TUESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Matthew 18 verse 21: Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?'*

Forgiveness is both an extravagant and a precious thing. Extravagant because it occupies prime space in our hearts and minds. Precious, because it's a freedom that once you have it, you can't lose it. Forgiveness is not easy. The wrong done to us multiplies and festers and feasts on its own fat. We remember it in detail; we embroider on it, box and gift it to ourselves as a badge of honour. It makes us judgmental. It makes us bitter and revengeful. It's not sustainable because the turnover is too high. It turns us against good, and choosing evil, becomes institutional.

How then do we get rid of it? Because forgiving is not easy! It asks of us to eat humble pie. To focus on the *us* and not on the *me*. It goes against the popular strain of ME FIRST.

It's UBUNTU. It's that precious, inexplicable feeling called love. And when you learn to love unconditionally, you can forgive unconditionally – no matter how heinous the crime, how deep the wound, how profound the insult ...

The offer of forgiveness is a moral imperative to forgive as many times as the grace of God allows us to. To err is human, to forgive divine.

*Give us honest hearts, O God, and send your kindly Spirit to help us confess our sins and bring us the peace of your forgiveness: in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Ingrid Jones** is the Director of Mikateko Media, a mother, wife and social media junkie.

## WEDNESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Matthew 5:17b: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil."*

Some of us have seen the recent holiday blockbuster movie "Exodus", and that in 3D! You'll remember the scene where Moses is chipping away at the Ten Commandments along with a rather strange depiction of God as a young boy. This is a vengeful God who is rather deliberate in the plagues he brings upon the Egyptians.

In the various books of the Bible one can see how people's view of God has developed and changed over thousands of years. As an extension of this realisation the Presbyterian Church of the USA recently acknowledge their complicity in misleading people over decades in confusing the modern state of Israel with the Biblical Israel and committed themselves to more responsible readings of the Bible in future.

The Old Testament laws were a way of imparting life wisdom to quite primitive people; a way of ordering society. And now here at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5 we hear Jesus saying he is the fulfilment of the law (referring to the Law and the Prophets: the Old Testament), giving it its full meaning. In Jesus 'God consciousness' has indeed in a special way showed face and touched earth.

*Send your holy angels to watch over us, O God, that on our lips will be found your truth and in our hearts your love; so we may ever taste your goodness in the land of the living; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Laurie Gaum** is a Dutch Reformed-trained minister based at the Centre for Christian Spirituality which focuses on contemplative prayer and solidarity for social justice.

## WEDNESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Deuteronomy 4 verse 5: "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live."*

Shredded. By our inability to pick up the baton of non-racialism our hero generation bequeathed us. We channel Van Riebeeck and forget Madiba? Shredded. Boer. Black. Coolie. Coloured. We cannot forget the divisions our eyes have seen and the oppression we have known.

Neither can we forget the founding ethos of Ubuntu and diversity. Harder now than in 1994 when Archbishop Desmond Tutu baptized us a rainbow nation - how do you give meaning to this as the baby nation grows into a truculent young adult? Who will raise the flag if not you? There is still a long walk to freedom and the dream of non-racialism which never meant not seeing race but rising above it to find our common humanity. Don't let it fade from your heart as long as we live.

So, in this season of Lent, we find that 1% of the world own 48% of its wealth. At home, the gap's about the same. How can we forget the things our eyes have seen? And see. So much next to so little. Lwandle. Llandudno. Diepsloot. Dainfern.

Homeless people call a parliamentary bench a home by night. Side-by-side but a world apart. What when the whole country rings with the peal of "pay back the money"? Let it not fade from your heart.

*Living God, free us from a world without justice and a future without mercy; in your mercy establish justice, in your justice remember the mercy revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Ferial Haffajee** is Editor-in-Chief of City Press. She is also an alumnus of the Africa Leadership Initiative, a project of the Aspen Institute.

## THURSDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Luke 11 verse 20: "...if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you."*

The image of a house divided against itself, and its inevitable demise, is one that is very familiar to us. It is easy, therefore, to assume that Jesus is dealing here with the theme of unity and division. Instead, the theme of this passage of Scripture is actually one of "identity": who Jesus is, and what sort of power is at work in him.

Some in the crowds wonder if that power is demonic, whether his mission is satanic. But Jesus' surprising response is to frame the entire matter in terms of two competing basileias – "dominions" or "ways of ruling." There is Satan's "way of ruling," which uses power and authority to bind up the innocent, destroy life, and rob human beings of their voice. And then there is God's way

of ruling, which empowers the powerless, lifts up the downtrodden, and in all things gives life.

Jesus says, “Even if I heal the sick by the power of Satan, then you still can know that it is the power of God that is being revealed. For, inasmuch as Satan drives out Satan, he is serving God’s purpose,” which is to bind up and destroy the dominion of abuse, destruction, and death.

*May your kingdom come, O God, deliverance for the needy, with peace for the righteous, with overflowing blessing for all nations, with glory, honour and praise for Christ, the only Saviour.*

**Joshua Davis** has most recently been the Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at the General Theological Seminary in New York City.

## FRIDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

**Mark 12 verse 28:** *“One of the scribes came near ...”*

This short paragraph has always intrigued me. It is noticeably different in tone from the paragraphs that precede it. In Mark 11:27 Jesus comes into the Jerusalem temple for the third time. He has entered twice before, according to Mark. In Mark 11:11 he enters, briefly, and “he looked carefully at everything”. In Mark 11:15-19 Jesus enters the temple for a second time, driving out those engaging in particular economic practices and declaring the temple to be “a den of robbers”. And then in Mark 11:27 he enters for the third and last time.

Jesus’ time in the temple on his third visitation is divided into three sections or movements. The first movement is characterised by open hostility between the temple leadership and Jesus (11:27-12:27). In the third movement (12:35-13:2) Jesus teaches his disciples, instructing them to reject both what the temple leadership says and what they do, pointing to the poor widow as an example of the exploitative economic practices of the scribes (12:40).

What is intriguing about the second movement is that one of the scribes breaks away from the group of scribes that has been attacking Jesus. He crosses the floor, risking being seen to take sides with Jesus and the crowd who were listening to Jesus “with delight” (12:37). This takes great courage, to break away from the dominant group, to identify with those on the margin, and to ask the questions that no one else is asking. Jesus recognises the integrity and courage of this individual scribe, commending him and encouraging him to continue on this path: “you are not far from the kingdom of God”.

May each of us have the integrity and courage to stand with Jesus and those on the margins and to ask the questions that must be asked.

*Give us the music of your praise, Lord, morning, noon and night that our lives may be fruitful and our lips confess you as the true and only God.*

**Gerald West** is Professor of Old Testament and African Biblical Interpretation in the School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics in the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## FRIDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 81:10: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."*

Ethiopians have a meal-time custom known as gorsha, in which one takes a handful of food and feeds it directly to the mouth of a friend or a younger relative. Gorsha is a gesture of love and hospitality. It is also an intimate physical act, and it demands a kind of humble receptivity, a willingness to receive, that often makes those unfamiliar with the custom feel uncomfortable or embarrassed.

God's provision reminds me of gorsha. Gorsha never comes from a stranger, and God proves that God is no stranger to us. To the Biblical people of Israel, God is the one who "brought you out" from slavery to freedom. For the people of South Africa, God is the one who "brought you out" from a brutalizing system of oppression to an ever-developing democracy. For each of us, God is the one who has rescued and provided, healed and redeemed, in ways obvious and subtle. Even when God seems absent, God promises never to leave us nor forsake us, to walk through the fire with us (Deut 31:6, Heb 13:5; Isa 43:2). God has chosen a title in relation to each one of us, a title that affirms God's past history with us as an assurance of God's present faithfulness.

The receptivity that gorsha requires is like the humble acknowledgement of God as our gracious provider (Matt 6:31-33). When we experience ourselves as beloved creatures before God, our mouths are filled not only with the provision we need, but also with songs of praise (Ps 63:5). God moves our hearts to gratitude, and whatever provision we receive from the hand of our heavenly Parent becomes seasoned with joy. And when we allow ourselves to be knit by the Holy Spirit into a community of disciples, our collective joy and gratitude enable us to share the abundance, to participate in God's distribution of provision, so that all mouths are filled with both food and praise (see 2 Cor 8-9).

May our Lenten fast and Eucharistic celebration remind us that we live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4) and by every gorsha that comes forth from the loving fingers of the one who is Faithful and True (1 Thess 5:24, Heb 10:23, Rev 19:11).

*Tender God, gentle protector in time of trouble, pierce the gloom of despair and give us, with all your people, the song of freedom and the shout of praise; in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Awet Andemicael** is a singer, writer, and disciple of Christ, currently teaching and studying Christian theology at Yale University.

## SATURDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

**Hosea 6:6:** *“Come; let us return to the LORD.”*

One of my favourite Christmas holiday films is Richard Curtis’s “Love Actually”. He employs to great effect the standard formula of the romantic comedy. The characters Jamie and Aurelia exemplify this perfectly. Will she turn back and look over her shoulder? Will he wait long enough to see her turn?

Hosea uses the genre of romance to convey his prophetic message. The Lord patiently woos wayward Israel waiting for her to return. But we know that while in the romantic comedy the film makers can capture the moment and, as with Jamie and Aurelia the violins can soar, we can breathe a sigh and wipe a tear from our eyes, this is just a moment. It is what follows that really matters.

Turning, as important as the moment is, is not the complete story. It is the “pressing on” (vs 3) that counts. This is where the real stuff of returning will happen, and note that we do that together.

In similar vein Paul reflects on his own journey. There was a moment on the road to Damascus (Acts 22) that was crucial. But he had not arrived. He had to press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of him (Phil 3:12ff).

*Lord Jesus, give me grace to turn and take hold of all that you generously hold out and invite me into.*

**Duncan Mclea** is Parish Rector Team Leader of St John's Parish, Wynberg, Cape Town.

## SATURDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

---

*Luke 18 verse: 9 ff: "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt..."*

Oh, how I want to be the tax collector in this Parable, and how often I am the Pharisee. Because at the heart of this story Jesus tells us the essence of what it is to be a Christian: to be in a relationship with Him.

Our salvation was purchased at a terrible price; the death of the Son of God on a lonely cross. A shameful death embraced for every sin ever committed. So that through it we are reunited with God; all we need to do to enter into this relationship is to admit that we are sinners and unworthy and we are restored and justified - our brokenness is healed.

The Pharisee has lived his life according to rules, to doing the "right thing", and I hope he found the truth before he died. That he too fell on his knees and admitted that nothing we do will justify us before God, only confession can do that. I am often the Pharisee, proud of myself for not being a bad person, when I need to be the Tax Collector, throwing myself on the unmerited gift of grace from God: The gift that puts me back in a relationship with Jesus and justifies me.

*O God, our helper and defender, vindicate our faith, that we may see your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Jennifer Crocker** works in Corporate Communications and is a Member of the Order of St Lazarus.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

---

*Numbers 21 verses 4, 5: "... the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?'"*

It is easier to visualise the freedom sought, but far more demanding to achieve it. Early success might even engender illusion: the false assurances of a goal reached too soon.

Particularly in the face of external obstacles, the first encounters with crippling difficulty soon lay bare the illusion. Distress begins when faith and hope stumble. Anguish follows when doubt assails confidence and conviction, and the shadow of the strenuous present soon covers with darkness the future once envisioned with pride and resolution.

It is then that the twists and turns traversed on the outward journey through forest, over mountains, across deserts and along long roads without horizon, all dwindle

Numbers 21:4-9; Ps 107:1-3, 17-22;  
Eph 2:1-10; Jn 3:14-21

---

in the face of the journey to be undertaken inside. Then the twists and turns of the inner journey face you like a hooded cobra.

You will know at that moment that the freedom you desire and seek will come from the clarity of your mind, the pure passion of your heart, the compassion of your soul, and the resilience of your purpose. All markers along the journeys within and without, they bear the image of the covenant that will guide you and your bonded community of fellow travellers to freedom.

*When faith is scorned and love grows cold, then, God of hosts, rebuild your Church on lives of thankfulness and patient prayer; through Jesus Christ your eternal son.*

Njabulo S Ndebele is a celebrated novelist and is a consistent and fearless commentator on a range of issues in the public square.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

---

*John 3.17: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."*

As we continue our Lenten reflection we are again reminded of the abundant, boundless mercy of God. Our focus in Lent is not on sin, nor evil, but on God's great acts to save his people, his intervention in history and in the lives of men and women. We do not dwell on punishment or the wrath of God, but his love for all people and his desire that all be saved. Rather than banish people or separate them from God's love, Jesus came to call people from death to life.

It is our encounter with this love that enables us to share the mission of Christ. We too are sent to witness to salvation and life. We do this best by learning from Jesus himself. We do not condemn or judge. By living the faith in

Numbers 21:4-9; Ps 107:1-3, 17-22;  
Eph 2:1-10; Jn 3:14-21

---

humility, gentleness and simplicity, we call forth the good that exists in each person, we build bridges of tolerance in an era marked by fundamentalism and religious arrogance, and we raise our prophetic voice of outrage as millions are condemned to live on the margins of society, in poverty, inequality and with shattered dreams.

Humility, mercy and gentle love inspire hope in the hearts of people.

*Lord God, bring us out of the prison of our despair  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Stephen Breslin** is Archbishop of the archiepiscopal Catholic Diocese of Cape Town

## MONDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 30 verse 11: "You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy."*

A year ago I experienced bleak grief after my mother died. My energy was sapped, I was disconnected in prayer, tense in body and unable to 'do Lent'. I wobbled, tried, failed, sunk into sadness, survival mode. I cried to God for relief; I wondered in trust when it would come.

My balcony overlooks community gardens. As winter set in, the ground grew bare. Time went by, green leaves appeared, slowly the gardens returned to life. Each morning I watched the gardens grow. When Easter came I cried. I had not known if I would make it. A while later, joy.

There is much to mourn in our lives, in our hurting world. We lament the violence and loss of life on a monumental scale. We struggle with loss in our lives and loss of hope.

Jesus struggled in the wilderness and died an agonizing death on the cross. The resurrection clothed him and the disciples with joy. We can trust that God will turn our mourning into dancing, the sackcloth on the world will be taken off and God will clothe us with joy.

Psalm 30 is urgently necessary for preachers because it invites us into an honest ministry of accompaniment. We can proclaim God's redemption in Christ persuasively only while walking with our beloved community through its dark and agonistic experiences of the Cross.

*Oh God, I don't love you, I don't even want to love you,  
but I want to want to love you!*

**Wilma Jacobsen** is a South African Anglican priest ministering in the USA. At present she is Rector of Saint Jude's Episcopal Church in Cupertino, California.

## TUESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 46 verse 1: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult."*

The first verse of Psalm 46 contains such encouragement for those who are witnessing to the mighty works of God. It speaks of resilience "though the earth should change". On this St Patrick's day we can see that the truth contained in this verse was true in the life of Patrick.

Patrick was born, according to legend, in England, as the son of a chief. At that time England was made up of a whole lot of tribes over which kings ruled, with chiefs having authority in the various villages in each kingdom. Patrick's village was a Christian one.

At a young age Patrick was captured by some raiders from Ireland, and he was taken back to Ireland as a slave. He worked hard, particularly taking care of the animals of his master. While out in the countryside Patrick prayed and planned. After six years as a slave he made his move – he

ran away, and managed to get over the sea back to England. Once home he went to Europe to train to be a priest.

After he was ordained he asked to be sent to Ireland so he could proclaim the Gospel to his captors. His burning desire was to witness to those who had enslaved him. The church sent him to Ireland to witness to the pagans – and made him a bishop for the job.

We remember St Patrick as the Apostle of Ireland. It is a land renowned for its faith, and for the countless thousands sent out to be witness to all corners of the world.

*Lord God, let your righteousness sweep wickedness from its throne, that we may live free from fear and stumbling; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Richard Girdwood** is Rector of The Parish of St Michael and All Angels, Observatory, Cape Town.

## WEDNESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*John 5 verse 21: "The Son makes alive those he wishes."*

**Cyril of Jerusalem,**

**Bishop & Teacher of the Faith c.386**

Jesus makes some astonishing claims including his assertion that He is indeed a source of life, the bringer of new possibilities and the sign of judgement. A close reading of the passage shows that He challenges us to understand that in Him relationships change, courage is recouped, fear is vanquished and we are tasked to live fearlessly amidst the harsh realities of life.

Cyril of Jerusalem is remembered as a teacher of the faith. He is remembered for his wise theological instructions to catechumens and his sermons on forgiveness.

Yet he is remembered more for the sermons he preached not with words but with his life. He endured exile twice rather than follow the edicts of often corrupt, wily political leaders. He fearlessly sold the treasures of the church including

a vestment made of gold thread when famine struck the land and rendered the already poor even more vulnerable. Through these bold, prophetic, concrete actions he followed Jesus in bringing people to life. His actions inspired hope and brought about fundamental material changes for profoundly marginalised people. He understood that theological insights into new life and abiding hope were indeed inspiring but that actions on behalf of justice carried the potential for personal and social transformation. Indeed that was the reason the authorities were so afraid of him. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop of a city whose very name speaks of peace, helps us to understand that true peace, real hope and fully human lives can only come about when our witness is life giving for the most vulnerable.

*Lord God, may we love justice more than gain and mercy more than power; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Peter-John Pearson** is the Chairperson of the Working Group and the Director of the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops' Conference's Parliamentary Liaison Office

## THURSDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*John 5 verse 35: "He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."*

To become "awake to witness" consistently during Lent, then the teaching of Jesus from this passage, is helpful. In his monologue, Jesus uses the word "marturia" and its cognates eleven times. Sometimes this word is translated "witness" and sometimes "testify", inferring that we tell the truth about what we know or have experienced, thus corroborating another's testimony. Hence, Jesus testifies to the truth of his own integrity and authority, affirming that God the Father sent him.

Jesus recognises that people will not of necessity accept his testimony. He maintains that his words give credibility to his witness, words which are in line with Torah. Further, in addition to his words consider his deeds, his miracles, especially the healings; do not they authenticate the truth of his divine mission?

Jesus then appeals to the witness of John, "Elijah redivivus", a herald from God. John testified that Jesus was

“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. Yet, if John’s witness cannot convince people, then what about Moses? Moses, the greatest Jewish prophet and undisputed author of Torah, “spoke of Jesus”.

All this bears “witness” or “testifies to” or “supports” Jesus’ claims to be the one who reconciles us to God and to each other. During this journey together let us reflect on Jesus’ words and deeds and on the testimony of John and Moses. Let us pray and hope that, finding a renewed self, we will serve others in the Father’s name.

*Holy God, when our memories blot out your kindness and we ignore your patient love, remember us, remake us, and give to us poor sinners the rich inheritance of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**James Harris** is Dean of Studies of the Diocese of Cape Town.

## FRIDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 34 verse 18: "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."*

Most if not all people have some experience of being broken-hearted and even crushed in spirit. The causes are many, from the present and the past: what happens in the family, in our intimate relationships, in our childhood, in the work place – the death of a loved one, expected or unexpected.

How much more those who are weighed down by discrimination, war, poverty and oppression. Some of us have what has been called multiple woundedness – layers and levels of wounds that affect our bodies and our souls.

What about you? What has helped you in your darkest hour.

My darkest hour was when I received a letter bomb back in 1990. In the midst of the darkness and the pain, God was there walking beside me, travelling with me.

Like people of faith throughout the ages I turned to the Psalms. I listened to the voice of God, speaking words of comfort, encouragement and healing. I felt less alone.

Often we can be the voice of God and healers of one another whenever we listen compassionately to one another's pain. God is with us.

*Lord, help us to bear witness to your steadfast love, shown in the face of your dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

**Michael Lapsley** is Director of the Institute for Healing of Memories and Canon for Reconciliation and Healing of The Cathedral of St George the Martyr, Cape Town.

## SATURDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Jeremiah 11 verse 19: ‘...let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will no longer be remembered!’*

Words like these have echoed through history with monotonous regularity. They are spoken wherever perpetrators gather to make common cause against others, or where a scapegoat is identified and singled out for shaming. Sometimes they plot in whispers, sometimes brazenly. Sometimes they name their hapless victims but mostly they merely label them – enough to damn and objectify them rather than humanising!

The prophet Jeremiah speaks for all who have been singled out for persecution and on their behalf makes his plea to the One to whom he has committed his cause to protect him. He describes himself as one of God’s lambs who, with his persecutors are God’s flock – he, though,

needs protection and justice! What has come over them? How have they become the very thing from which God had saved them? How can they turn around and brutalise their fellow compatriots? Not only is it mind-boggling, it is contrary to common sense! Who has ever heard of a people changing its God? In Lent we journey on via dolorosa – the way of suffering. Many walk this road daily. Where do we place ourselves? Are we with those who make common cause or are we with the Lamb(s) of God?

*Saving God, open the gates of righteousness that your pilgrim people may enter and be built into your living temple and the cornerstone of our salvation.*

**Terrence Lester** is a parish priest working in the Constantia Valley where he lives with his wife and adult children.

## 21 MARCH: HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, SOUTH AFRICA

---

This day is also declared International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the UN.

*Psalm 7 verse 9, 10: "O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous, you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God. God is my shield, who saves the upright in heart."*

There is an important distinction between having and being. Being free requires a continuous set of actions by the freed people, whereas merely having freedom could relate only to the act of lifting the yoke of slavery, sin, or repression. In the instance of a people, like ourselves, who have the experience of both the yoke of apartheid, and the process of its lifting, we are called upon to be vigilant against slipping into the bad ways of the past. Apartheid was adjudged by the United Nations to be a crime against humanity. The actions would be a crime regardless of who the perpetrators would be. It is the system of apartheid, made up as it was, of a manifest set of laws and actions that is a crime.

The command, “Stand, then, as free people” is a command for vigilance and continuous action against wrongs perpetrated against the vulnerable. The prize we have that affirms our freedom is our Constitution. It sets very high standards of conduct for all of us. We cannot merely have it, the command requires that we must live it. A free people should not allow the violation of our Constitution.

*O loving Creator you have liberated us and in Christ you have set us free. By your Spirit may we continue to live as free people and not allow ourselves to become slaves again.*

**Trevor Manuel** was the Minister in the Presidency for National Planning Commission and served as the Minister of Finance for the South African Government.

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

---

*Jeremiah 31 verse 33: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

This passage proclaims God's covenantal commitment to all human beings and to all creatures. God's covenant means that God commits Godself to us. God shall be our God, and we shall be God's people.

Covenant also means that this commitment is formalized in a contract. God enters into an official, formal relationship with us. God contracts to be our God who loves us with covenantal love. God calls us and enables us to love God and all people and creatures with covenantal love.

Jeremiah proclaims the new covenant and the renewal of God's commitment and contract in a context where the covenantal people who are in exile think that the original covenant had been terminated by God. They, however,

learn that God's covenantal love is not extinguished by our unfaithfulness and sin. God stays true to the commitment and contract, despite our failure to keep the covenant.

The new covenant and the renewal of the original commitment and contract reaches its culmination point in Jesus Christ who fulfils the covenantal responsibilities on our behalf, and who through the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, works in our minds' and hearts' covenantal and contractual commitment and love to God and to all God's people and creatures.

*God of loving mercy, in this place of our pilgrimage turn your laws into songs, that we may find your promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Nico Koopman** is Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Director of the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology and professor of Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch University.

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

---

*John 12 verse 23: The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

Often quoted are the words of St Irenaeus: “The glory of God is man fully alive” (or “the living man”). We have our own hunch about what being fully alive may be. We have set out to gain that prize in many ways by our own good efforts at creating a just society and world. The newspapers, facebook, twitter feeds and blogs are alive, calling for the exposure and debunking of all that is corrupt and unjust – usually about what others should not have or should do. We are the movers and shakers.

“Wherever politics tries to be redemptive it is promising too much. Where it wishes to do the work of God, it becomes not divine, but demonic,” wrote Pope Benedict XVI. In this Passion Week, our eyes are fixed on Jesus, the Son of Man. We attend to him for we cannot save ourselves.

Jer 31:31-34; Ps 119:9-16;  
Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

---

In former days on Passion Sunday the images were veiled because of the gospel that day: Jesus hid himself (Jn 8.59). St Ignatius of Loyola says (3rd Week, Spiritual Exercises) “the Divinity hides itself”. The full quote of St Irenaeus is: “The glory of God is man fully alive. The glory of man is the vision of God.” We cannot save ourselves, bring ourselves into life.

To attend to Jesus, the true Son of Man in the hours of his passion is to attend to God incarnate, the one who is fully alive, free in his oneness with the Father, free in self-giving love for the salvation of the world.

*Crown us, O God, but with humility and robe us with compassion that we may walk gently on the earth with you, our God, forever.*

**David Cherry** is a South African Anglican priest in London who has worked in parishes and universities since going to be trained there in 1988 at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield.

## MONDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

### *Psalm 23*

The Shepherd as a figure is also representative of women; in fact, he identifies with all human beings in his task of nurturing the wounded and outcast.

So his role and value arises from the burdens of his pasture. This burden may be a woman being continuously sexually abused, it may be loneliness, it may be socio-economic factors such as poverty. Through suffering we identify a comforting, nurturing Shepherd and through this lens we see the warm hands of a mother clasping her baby near her bosom.

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.” David a man, on the other hand, declares such an utterance as he

has identified this very Shepherd who chooses to bear his burden and to lighten his load. We experience the “saving-grace” of this Shepherd when we allow him to enter into our trials and tribulations and to share in our joy and suffering.

It is only when we make this decision that we permit ourselves to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

*God our Shepherd, you led us and saved us in times of old; do not forget your people in their troubles, but raise up your power to sustain the poor and the helpless; for the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Hleziphi Mawande Mhlambi** is a B Div student at the University of Stellenbosch.

## MONDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Hosea 3 verses 1, 3: "The Lord said to me again, 'Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress... And I said to her, 'You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore ...'"*

The reference in the text is to spiritual adultery and religious infidelity. The "whore" metaphor epitomises Israel's unfaithfulness to God. However, efforts of renewal, remedial action and reunion heighten marriage as a means of healing.

Firstly, healing Spiritual Adultery; the constant search outside of a trusted relationship. Secondly redressing Religious infidelity; the inability to settle, and being never satisfied. Thirdly, resuscitating Holy Fidelity; being God-centred for a collective benefit. In experiential terms, it is for the one to discover a strength area to assist the other to overcome an area of weakness. This is a recurring experience with each exposure role being switched as per area of competence.

In Hosea (3:1-5), continuing from its preceding chapters, a second chance is afforded to heal a long history of infidelity. The Ten Commandments as a yardstick

exposes Israel's inability to live by the norms that govern their relationship with God. The most pertinent is the fostering of monotheism; "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the Land of slavery. You shall have no other God (Ex 20:2-3)."

So, the epitome of Holy Fidelity is a balanced footing that recognises our inability to be good without God, our strength and faithfulness. Oneness with and in God, firstly, decreases the propensity to sin and unfaithfulness and, secondly, increases the ability to please God, and accentuates responsive devoutness.

*Lord Jesus Christ, when scorn and shame besiege us and hope is veiled in grief, hold us in your wounded hands and make your face shine on us again, through Jesus Christ our Lord and God.*

**Molefi Olifant** is Rector of The Parish of St Francis of Assisi, Moroka, in the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg.

## TUESDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*John 8 verse 25: "Who are you?" They asked. "Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied.*

In John's Gospel Jesus is one with God who had created all things from the beginning (1:1-5). In Chapter 8:21-30, the Pharisees who show ignorance about Jesus' identity are also ignorant of their own condition. This ignorance separates them from God (8:21). Jesus clearly states his identity – I am, highlighting the danger they're in because of their unbelief and how to remedy it (8:24). Jesus' identity had been cause for concern to them since he taught in the temple courts (7:14ff) and now again they ask the question "Who are you?" Earlier Jesus had claimed to be the light of the world and whoever followed him would have the light of life (8:12).

Even though they do not understand that Jesus is one with God, they will know when they have "lifted up the Son of

Man” (8:28; 3:14). Yet Jesus said nothing in judgement of them because the One who sent him “is reliable”. The example of Jesus life, teaching and sacrificial death is the epitome of God’s love for the world.

May this Lenten season be a time to draw closer to God as we examine our “own condition” in the light of Jesus Christ.

*O Christ, Son of the living God, help us when we are too cast down to pray, and grant that we may trust you all our days, for you are with us in our living and our dying, Jesus, Lord and God.*

**Miranda Pillay** is Senior lecturer in New Testament Studies and Ethics at the University of the Western Cape and served as Lay Canon in the Diocese of Saldanha Bay 2005-2013.

## WEDNESDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Luke 1 verse 29: "But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be."*

Early English translations of this verse describe Mary's surprise at the angel's appearance and her intellectual reflection on Gabriel's greeting. John Wyclif renders, "she was troubled ... and thought what manner (of) salutation this was." William Tyndale's 1526 version is more specific: "she ... cast in her mind what manner of salutation that should be." Now although Luke doesn't record what Mary was doing when Gabriel arrived with news of her pregnancy, Western Christian art shows Mary reading or praying. Da Vinci's *Annunciation* (1472-75) in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, for example, depicts Mary's right hand resting on the place in the Bible she has been reading as the angel kneels to her. Her surprise does not dislodge her mental engagement with the text.

In showing Mary's reflective activity on Gabriel's words, Luke's gospel is distinctive in the ancient world: he thinks that she has a mind. Luke uses a verb to describe Mary's mental activity, *dialogizomai*, "to discuss, reason, deliberate or consider." Western Christian art continues and enhances this trend.

Today it may seem obvious that women have minds but in the ancient world women were known to have mental faculties but not reason or rational thought. When we experience and value women's intellectual capacities we endorse Luke's view of Mary.

*Christ in my mind that I may see what is true*

**Deirdre Good** is Academic Dean & Professor of New Testament at the General Theological Seminary, New York, NY, USA.

## THURSDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*John 8 verse 53: "Do you think you are greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died, too. Who do you think you are?"*

Some Jewish leaders are angry. The issue at stake is identity. Jesus, they say, is twisting their sacred teachings – about their origins, culture, faith-heritage and their destiny. It's serious stuff, disagreeing with the very essence of that which gives people their identity. And when Jesus suggests that if they follow his understanding they will live forever, the leaders say he's mad and ask him who he thinks he is?

But Jesus sees things differently. Why? Is it not because he doesn't base his identity solely on the constructs of history, geography, culture, even theology as do the Jewish leaders? Without denying Abraham and Moses, he doesn't define himself by their traditional categories – but on something much deeper, more inclusive, and more substantial.

His identity comes from God; he is the Son of Man, a child of creation, the archetype of humanity connected from beginning to end to the Source of all. From where do we draw our identity? What constructs do we use to define ourselves? Geographic, racial, cultural or even faith-based constructs? Are we not first and foremost homo-sapiens, human beings, made in the image of God, children of the One Universe? Imagine if this is what we all thought we were.

*Christ in my face that I may shine with God.*

**Chris Ahrends** is a former chaplain to Archbishop Desmond Tutu and currently Canon Missioner of the Diocese of Saldanha Bay.

## THURSDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 105 verse 4: "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually."*

As I am writing here, we are following Giniel de Villiers, competing in the Dakar Endurance Race. In a few days we will be following the Proteas in their One Day International Cricket Series against the West Indies. And we all can't wait for the African Nations Soccer Cup! We all have something we follow. It could be our favourite team, our favourite series, band or movie star. We praise their abilities, their skills and their capacity to be successful in what they are doing. And we can't wait to talk about it!

In Psalm 105 we are called upon to follow what God is doing. According to his covenant, He sticks to his agreement to love and lead his people. God is doing what

God is doing best! And the best we can do is follow that. Look out for it, search for it, think about it, reflect and talk about it. Even discuss it with the commentaries (Sport and Religious!) Lent is a very rich time of the year to get some exercise in this, as we follow Jesus in his last days on earth. It reminds us that we are defined by what we follow and what stories we tell.

*Teach me to seek you, and reveal yourself to me as I seek:  
For unless you instruct me. I cannot seek you, and unless  
you reveal yourself I cannot find you.*

**Johan van Rooyen** is the Dominee of the Groote Kerk Reformed Church, Cape Town.

## FRIDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 18 verse 1: I love you, LORD, my strength.*

David was a good looking and talented man. He danced in the streets, chased beautiful women and often behaved very badly. He was an expert repentant. But appears to have been a righteous king, an acclaimed warrior, musician, and poet.

Above all he loved God with a passion, as reflected by the intimacy in the first line of our psalm: "I love you, LORD, my strength."

So often the Scriptures tell us how much God loves us but how passionately do I love God? I am grateful. I know he is my rock. I praise him as my Creator. I ask for his help and forgiveness. I try to impress him with good works.

I rejoice in my gift of faith. BUT how good am I at just loving him? Am I capable of getting through one day without a please or thank-you or praise. Just a bit of plain old fashioned comfortable love. I'm not sure.

I do know that if I could achieve this the rest of the verses would automatically fall into place. As would my love for my neighbour and myself.

*Let me seek you in desiring you: let me desire you in seeking you. Let me find you in loving you: let me love you in finding you.*

**Loraine Tulleken** is an Anglican priest and the editor of Southern Anglican, freelance journalist, author.

## SATURDAY, FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

---

*Psalm 121 verses 1: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."*

I love the King James Version of the psalms, particularly ps.121, for hills and mountains are an inspiration to me, numinous, places where I sense the divine. So I read with joyous anticipation 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord.'

Once again I was transported, inspired. But what, I suddenly wondered, happens in other translations?

I turned to the Jerusalem Bible and found the prosaic 'I lift my eyes to the mountains:/ Where is my help to come from?/ Help comes to me from Yahweh.'

Instead of an inspiring statement we find a limiting question! This too in other translations I consulted. This led me to consider the complexity of biblical translation. In particular I was fascinated by the work of St Jerome; I thought of the countless illustrations of him, meditating in the desert or working in his study - always accompanied by his grateful lion! The much-maligned Moodle gives

a treasure chest of depictions of the saint, showing how artists through the ages have interpreted his struggles. How fascinating to share their insights!

I admit I cannot feel at one with Verse 7: 'The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul.' What about the Crusades? The Holocaust? Boko Haram at Baga? But then I think of Neil Aggett, Chris Hani, Steve Biko, Gandhi...somehow their messages have survived, their 'souls' are preserved.

I am grateful to David for this psalm and to those who have brought it to me, here, in my home.

*Spirit of comfort and longing, enfold my fear, unclothe me of my pride, unweave my thoughts, uncomplicate my heart and give me surrender; that I may tell my wounds, lay down my work and greet the dark.*

**Nancy Gordon** is a Cathedral parishioner who refers to herself as "nonagenarian from Eastern Cape who loves nature, literature, music, visual arts and her dog."

## PALM SUNDAY

---

*Mark 14 verse 17ff: "When it was evening, he came with the twelve."*

The separation of religion from the mundane world in which we live – ranging from domestic tribulations and politics to our daily habits and idiosyncrasies – is an invention of the European Enlightenment that has come to dominate religious belief in the West. This is completely foreign to the religion of Jesus.

There are two indisputable historical facts about Jesus of Nazareth: the first is that he was a Jew who was part of Jewish resistance against the Roman occupying forces in Palestine; the second is that he was crucified by the Romans for his involvement in this process. Possibly belonging to the Essene community who foresaw the coming of a messiah who would draw together their spiritual and nationalist hopes, Jesus entered Jerusalem on what we today call Palm

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Ps 31:9-16;  
Phil 2:5-11; Mark 14: 1-15: 47

---

Sunday. His followers celebrated his triumphant entry. The Romans saw it as an act of high treason.

The Gospel reading for today tells of Jesus' premeditated preparation for his entry into Jerusalem at Passover, which is a time within which the Jews commemorate the exodus of the slaves from Egypt and anticipate God's rule on earth. The reading in the Epistle to the Philippians admonishes us to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

*Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness: through your gentleness we find comfort in fear. Your warmth gives life to the dead: your touch makes sinners righteous.*

**Charles Villa-Vicencio** is a respected authority in matters related to transitional justice and reconciliation. A distinguished theologian he also served as national research director of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

## MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

---

*Hebrews 9 verse 14: "... the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!"*

The Letter to the Hebrews was written at a time when they wanted to leave the Christian faith and return to Judaism. The author explains to them why this move would not suffice, by comparing well-known cleansing rituals from the Jewish tradition (verse 13) with the ultimate cleansing act of Jesus (verse 14).

The traditional cleansing rituals include the use of the blood of bulls, goats and the ashes of a heifer (or a young cow), according to Numbers 19:2-21. People who had come into contact with corpses, or who ate unclean foods, menstruated, had skin diseases, among other situations, were said to be unclean. It was understood that one has to be clean to approach God. The above-mentioned blood and ashes were used in specific ways to cleanse the unclean externally, but not internally.

Much more than the Old Testament rituals that clean, in a symbolic sense, the outer body, does the unblemished, spotless blood of Christ purify the internal moral conscience of every person. The author speaks of the preciousness of Christ's blood, shed on the Cross - a preciousness only recognised by those who know their own human state of impurity and imperfection.

*Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us: in your love and tenderness remake us. In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness: for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.*

**Janine Williams** is a family counsellor, concert pianist and a minister at the Uniting Reformed Church in Sarepta, Kuilsriver, South Africa.

## TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

---

*John 12 verse 26: "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour."*

Our spirit should be quick to reach out toward God, not only when it is engaged in meditation; at other times also, when it is carrying out its duties, caring for the needy, performing works of charity, or giving generously in the service of others.

Our spirit should long for God and call him to mind, so that these works may be seasoned with the salt of God's love, and so make a palatable offering to the Lord of the universe.

Isaiah 49:1-7; Ps 71:1-14;  
1 Cor 1:18-31; John 12:20-36

*Speak unto me the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom. On Thee do I set my hope, O my God, that Thou shalt enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of Thy knowledge, not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them. Amen.*

**John Chrysostom** was Archbishop of Constantinople and an Early Church Father known for his preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders.

## WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

---

*Isaiah 50 verse 4: "The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word."*

Go and find Jesus when your patience and strength give out and you feel alone and helpless. He is waiting for you. Say to him, 'Jesus, you know exactly what is going on. You are all I have, and you know all. Come to my help.' And then go and don't worry about how you are going to manage. That you have told God about it is enough. He has a good memory.

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

---

*Look upon me, that I may love you. Call me that I may see  
you and forever enjoy you. Amen.*

**Jeanne Jugan** was a French woman who grew up during the social upheavals of the French Revolution. She was known for her dedication to the neediest of the elderly poor. Her work led to the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who care for the elderly who have no other resources.

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

---

*John 13 verse 15: "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."*

Today we reach the climax of our Lenten pilgrimage and our journey finds fulfilment in these three great days, collectively referred to as the Triduum. So, however you may have fared in the forty days of Lent, today we are invited to enter more consciously into the love of God which these three days highlight. The Church seeks to make the point that the three days are really one in that no blessing is given at the end of the Eucharist tonight with the culmination at the Easter Vigil Mass.

Unlike the way commercial interests have dominated our celebration of Christmas, the liturgy for Holy Week sets the path for our journey and calls us to deepen our witness to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke put the institution of the Eucharist, the Last Supper as the

Exodus 12:1-4, [5-10], 11-14; Ps 116: 1-2, 12-18;  
1 Cor 11:23-26; John 13: 1-17, 31b-35

---

central act of Maundy Thursday. St John, however does not mention the Lord's supper but since he is guided by revealing Jesus as "the Word made flesh", shows Jesus making love incarnate, revealed in human form, in washing the feet of his disciples, including Judas who betrays him. At the conclusion of this act of humility Jesus says: "For I have set you an example, that you should also do as I have done to you." At every Eucharist we not only "do this in remembrance" but we do to one another as Jesus has done to us, in washing our feet. This is the way of love, love which enables us to say: "Lord Jesus, by your grace may we become what we receive" today and every day.

*Look upon me, that I may love You. Call me that I may see You, and forever enjoy You. Amen.*

**Rowan Smith** is a former Dean of The Cathedral of St George the Martyr, Cape Town.

## GOOD FRIDAY

---

*Hebrews 10 verses 24, 25: "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

What does Good Friday mean to us as Christians, followers of Jesus Christ? The epistle to the Hebrews has helped believers over the ages to deal with this question as they were facing the harsh realities of trying and striving to be faithful in a world that reflected little of the completed work of salvation in Christ.

The author of Hebrews makes it clear that God has spoken in the past in diverse ways, and then decisively through the Son - in a very concrete and real manner; not from a distance or through angelic messengers, but right in our midst. In the messed-up real world, the Son came to speak and demonstrated God's words and acts of salvation, liberation and freedom. Good Friday is good because of Christ Jesus, our High Priest who has opened

Isaiah 52: 13-53: 12; Ps 22;  
Hebrews 10: 16-25; John 18: 1-19:42

---

'a new and living way' for us through his body and blood! We may draw near, approach with a true, sincere heart in full assurance of faith! Once we have entered, we are transformed and made holy. But we are also connected to others in a living relationship in which we never walk alone, but provoke one another to love and good deeds, regularly seeking fellowship and encouraging one another.

Let us therefore hold unswervingly to our Easter confession of hope, and to one another - because the One who calls us, the author and perfecter of our faith, is faithful!

*Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life: by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.*

**Llewellyn LM MacMaster** is a minister of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and a full-time employee of Stellenbosch University.

## HOLY SATURDAY

---

*Psalm 88: verses 12 & 18: "Will your wonders be known in the region of darkness? Darkness is my only companion."*

*Hebrews 4: v 3, 13 & 15: Because we have faith it is we who enter that rest of which has been said... One who has been tested in every way as we are...*



The accompanying image is the winter painting from a series and depicts Holy Saturday. Christ is in deep sleep, his body is in transformation as light out of the darkness rises behind him, symbolising this transformation and the hope of the resurrection message.

The painting hints at how nothing can separate Christ (and us who live in him) from God, even in the darkest and most remote of places, the waiting place of the dead.

The image answers yes to the Psalmist, your wonders are known in the region of darkness and darkness is not our only companion. We have Christ who has been there before as our trailblazer.

So as Hebrews 4 tells us, we can have faith to enter into times of rest, in the knowledge that deep within us just as with a seed underground, wondrous things are happening making way for new life.

Let us allow ourselves periods of true rest in the darkness where we can enter our unexplored dark places that are full of pregnant possibilities in trust and faith, that light will shine there and illuminate new life and hope. This also applies to our attitude to the ultimate journey into death itself.

*In the winter time of my life Lord, may I realize this as a period of rest and renewal in you.*

**Julia Skeen** is a visual artist who lives in Grahamstown and is a parishioner of the Cathedral of St Michael and St George, Grahamstown.

## EASTER DAY

---

*Romans 6 verse 8: "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him".*

At the empty tomb that Easter morning long ago, an angel said to Mary Magdalene: "He has been raised". These simple words changed her life and ours forever. They usher in a new time in which we are called to live resurrection lives. What does this mean? According to Paul in his letter to the Romans, this means that we have died with Christ and we will also live with him. To die with Christ is to say "yes" to the paschal journey that is the way of faith. This journey involves the life-long process of dying to self, of seeking daily to replace "me-me" with a resounding "yes" to Jesus. Resurrection living lets go of what is safe and known by trusting God in all things, even in the darkest moments. So living resurrection starts with our crosses. There is no Easter morning without Good Friday.

Isaiah 25: 6-9; Romans 6:3-11;  
Ps 114; Mark 16:1-8

---

Then Easter dawns. Christ's resurrection is also ours –we are offered living with Christ so intimately that the very core of our being says “yes” to his ways. We are now on the journey of becoming whom we truly are, human beings each uniquely created in the image of the living God. This image is ever before us in the person of Jesus – the perfect image of God who lived among us. Living resurrection is knowing the promise of healing, freedom, love and hope.

*My God, I give you this day. I offer you, now, all of the good that I shall do and I promise to accept, for love of you, all of the difficulty that I shall meet. Help me to conduct myself during this day in a manner pleasing to you. Amen. (St. Francis de Sales)*

**Denise M Ackerman** is a retired professor of Theology and Canon Theologian of The Cathedral of St George the Martyr, Cape Town.

## EASTER DAY

---

As the Christian community enters this special period of prayer and repentance it is an honour to share a reflection on Psalm 114.

Psalm 114 continues the theme of the previous Psalm which praises G-d for raising up the needy and the destitute. The psalmist makes reference to the miraculous splitting of the sea, and G-d's full control over nature.

We can only imagine the fear of the Israelites, fresh out of slavery, as they were being pursued by the Egyptians and stuck between the 'devil and the deep blue sea'. Yet they had faith in the word of G-d, travelled forth into the sea and miraculously walked upon dry land.

To me this teaches us that there are times in our lives, as individuals and as a community, when we can feel trapped and desperate. As South Africans we only need to turn on the news to hear of the seemingly insurmountable challenges that surround us, from dishonesty and

Isaiah 25: 6-9; Romans 6:3-11;  
Ps 114; Mark 16:1-8

---

corruption to violence and abuse. And at these times it is easy to throw our hands up in despair.

It is during these moments that the eternal words of the psalmist elevate us with words of encouragement.

They remind us that when we put our trust in G-d and translate that faith into action by going forward as one people with courage and conviction - united by our shared vision of building a just and honourable nation with peaceful co-existence between people of all faiths, then we can be assured of G-d's miraculous salvation and look forward to walking together hand in hand as brothers and sisters, into a bed of dry land, free of all the waters of strife, troubles and temptation, inspiring all of humanity towards a better and more peaceful future.

*May holy Wisdom, the breath of the power of God: may she who makes all things new in every age, enter our souls and make us friends of God. Amen.*

**Osher Feldman** is the Rabbi of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, Gardens Shul.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

---

The painting on the cover and within are used with the permission of the artist, Julia Skeen

Scripture texts are from New Revised Standard Version and on two occasions from the King James version.

An extract from a lecture delivered on September 18, 2002 by Arundhati Roy at the Lannan Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico, United States.

### **Prayers were sourced, or adapted, from the following:**

'All Desires Known' by Janet Morley.

Common Worship: Daily Prayer published by the General Synod of the Church of England.

My Life For the Poor, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, New York: Harper and Row, 1985, p. 97.

St. Augustine of Hippo; Thomas Aquinas; Bede the Venerable; Martin Luther; Teresa of Avila; St. Anselm of Canterbury.

