

Friends of the Eco-Justice Program,

❖ CAMPAIGNS & INITIATIVES

❖ TAKE ACTION

❖ NETWORK

❖ RESOURCES

❖ PARTNERS

Today begins the season of Lent - a time for us to journey with Christ to the Cross of Good Friday and empty tomb of Easter morning.

This year, we invite you to include as part of your Lenten practices to consider your impact upon God's Creation - and what steps you can take in your own life to bring yourself back into relationship with it. Each Sunday, we will send an email including the lectionary text for that week, a brief reflection, some study questions, and daily actions.



Henry Nouwen writes, "In the midst of a turbulent, often chaotic, life we are called to reach out with courageous honesty to our innermost self, with restless care to our fellow human beings, and with

increasing prayer to our God. To do that, however, we must face and explore our inner restlessness, our mixed feelings toward others, and our deep-seated suspicions about the absence of God." It is this journey that Lent is all about, and this year, we invite you to join us in it.

Click [here](#) to download this reflection in PDF form.

Ash Wednesday, February 25th, 2009:

Lectionary Text: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 (NRSV)

1-6: 6'Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

5 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen

by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

16-21: 'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Other Lectionary Readings: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2nd Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Reflection



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season on the Christian calendar - the beginning of our journey with Christ to death on the Cross and the empty tomb three days later. The text for Ash Wednesday begins with a reminder of the need for personal piety - and a need to be faithful in action even when no one is paying attention. This is especially important when looking at eco-justice, where truly the tiniest of personal actions can make a world's worth of difference. Often the

call put out by this office is to transform entire congregations, and to transform governmental policy regarding environmental issues. But equally, and perhaps more, important is the transformation of our faithful individual lives. If we are all living in harmony with the rest of God's Creation, especially when no one is looking, our governmental policies and churches will transform themselves.

Guiding Questions

The 2nd Corinthians reading says, "we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." If we lived our lives reflecting this reality, what would be different?

The 2nd Corinthians passage also reminds us that we are ambassadors of Christ

- how do we balance being ambassadors with practicing in secret, as our Matthew passage calls us to?

Daily Actions

Wednesday, February 25th - Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Thursday, February 26th - Remove one light bulb from your home and live without it for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, but also act as a reminder of what you are doing during Lent.

Friday, February 27th - Join our individual Carbon Reduction Campaign - and keep track of what you are doing!

http://www.nccecojustice.org/crc_individuals.php

Saturday, February 28th - Now take your individual action and become an ambassador for Christ, and God's Creation. Click [here](#) to download our 2009 Earth Day Resource and get your congregation involved.

Friends of the Eco-Justice Program,

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Henry Nouwen writes, "In the midst of a turbulent, often chaotic, life we are called to reach out with courageous honesty to our innermost self, with restless care to our fellow human beings, and with increasing prayer to our God.

To do that, however, we must face and explore our inner restlessness, our mixed feelings toward others, and our deep-seated suspicions about the absence of God." It is this journey that Lent is all about, and this year, we invite you to join us in it.



Click [here](#) to download our reflection for the first Sunday in Lent in PDF form.

Lectionary Text Mark 1:9-15 (NRSV)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Other Lectionary Readings: Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22

Reflection

Of course this week, if this is to be a Lenten reflection focused on our and



God's relationship with all of Creation, focus on the Genesis passage. It is the one where God clearly establishes Covenant with the entire Earth. I mean, in it God says, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." But we all know the environmental implications of that passage. What struck me this week was the importance of the rest of Creation in

the beginnings of Jesus ministry. In the Mark passage, Jesus comes out of the WATERS of baptism. He then goes out into the WILDERNESS, where is is with the WILD BEASTS. It is in these elements of Creation where Jesus ministry is birthed, begun, and formed. What does it say about the way we are living that many people around the globe today can't wade into non-polluted waters to experience the power of baptism? Or, that when we go into the wilderness, the number of wild beasts available to us has been reduced significantly through species extinction?

Finally, Jesus emerges from the water and wilderness to proclaim that the Kingdom of God has come near - and that the promise has been fulfilled. The challenge to us today is to live in that promise. To believe in that promise. And to extend that promise to all of Creation, just as God did in the covenant made with Noah. Jesus ministry, Jesus fulfillment of the promise, was borne out through the water and the wilderness. Let it be so with ours.

Guiding Questions

The 1st Peter passage notes that baptism doesn't serve to remove the dirt from our bodies, but rather to appeal to God for a good conscience. Jesus baptism changed the way he saw the world - how does the world look through baptized eyes?

What does it mean for the time to be fulfilled? And to believe in the promise? What does it look like to live in such a way that we believe in the promise?

Daily Actions

Sunday, March 1st - Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Monday, March 2nd - Look at what food you throw away this week. Aim to reduce it by a third by eating leftovers and shopping more carefully -using a list and planning your meals.

Tuesday, March 3rd - To help consider the value of water in the world, and the impacts of the global water crisis, plan a World Water Day celebration - click [here](#) to download our World Water Day resource.

Wednesday, March 4th - Take action to support wilderness and public lands. Click [here](#) to express your support for public lands to your congressional representatives.

Thursday, March 5th - Return to the lectionary texts for this week. What new emerges from a second reading of them? Try reading them with a group, seeing what new insights come forth.

Friday, March 6th - Spend some time remembering your baptism today, and the power implicit in that water. Remember the importance of water to God's Creation, and visit the [Ecumenical Water Network](#) of the [World Council of Churches](#), and their [Seven Weeks for Water](#) devotional series.

Saturday, March 7th - Use the weekend to spend some time in the wilderness. Take a hike, go skiing, or just get outside. Click [here](#) to download our wilderness resources, and add some devotional time to your experience.

Other Lectionary Readings: Genesis 17:1-17, 15-16, Psalm 22:23-31, Mark 8:31-38

Reflection

"For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace". It is easy to look at the problems existing in Creation today and cry out in despair. More species become extinct and endangered everyday. The warnings from scientists become more and more urgent as the impacts of global climate change continue to multiply. Each day more of our forests are cut down. And everyday millions of people worldwide live without access to clean water. But this passage, reinforced by the Genesis passage telling us of

the covenant between God and Abraham, reminds us that by resting in the promise of God, great things can happen. Great transformations can take place.



It is a reminder that it is not about us. It is about allowing God to work through us. Because Abraham had great faith in what God could accomplish through him, nations sprung forth. Lent is about journeying to another promise of God - the promise of renewed relationship with all of Creation. Sallie McFague writes, "The world imagined by our biblical texts is not a fantasy; it is what the Jewish and Christian traditions tell us is God's will for us and promise to us. The One in

whom we live and move and have our being assures us that this other world of appreciation for each and every individual creature living in networks of interrelationship and interdependence."

That is the promise in which we must have faith. The promise the Lenten season invites us to journey toward. The promise that we can live with right relationship with all of Creation around us - and transform that very Creation into the world God has promised.

Guiding Questions

What does this promise mean for you, in your life?

Our gospel passage this week reminds us that this won't be easy - that it will take sacrifice, and picking up our own cross. What does the sacrifice of living into this promise, of having the faith of Abraham, look like?

Daily Actions

Sunday, March 8th - Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Monday, March 9th - Double up journeys: do shopping on your way home from work, school or somewhere else you have to go today. Share rides with friends or try to do all your errands together.

Tuesday, March 10th - Incorporate the values of the promise of God to all of Creation into the life of your church. Consider organizing an Earth Day Sunday worship service as a starting point. Click [here](#) to download "Celebrating and Caring for God's Creation", the 2009 Earth Day resource from the Eco-Justice Program office.

Wednesday, March 11th - What comes in and out of your home? Reflect on what you have bought and consumed recently and challenge yourself or your consumption habits. Do you need everything you buy? Pray about what you might do to change any bad habits.

Thursday, March 12th - Return to the lectionary texts for this week. What new emerges from a second reading of them? Try reading them with a group, seeing what new insights come forth.

Friday, March 13th - This is the start of [Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#) in Washington, DC, the theme of which for this year is "Enough for all Creation". Support the efforts of the folks in DC by encouraging members of your congregation to sign postcards to your Congressional representatives. Click [here](#) for more information.

Saturday, March 14th - Two of the actions this week have looked at personal actions - how you travel, and what you buy. Consider Jesus message of giving up your life. Click [here](#) to measure your ecological footprint, and consider what other sacrifices may be being asked of you.

McFague, Sallie. "Epilogue: Human Dignity and the Integrity of Creation". *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God*. Darby Kathleen Ray, ed. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2006. Pg. 205

Click [here](#) to download our reflection for the third Sunday in Lent in PDF form.

Lectionary Text: John 2:13-22 (NRSV)

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Other Lectionary Readings: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Reflection

The money-changers in the temple. Often, when confronted with this text, it comes along with a message of keeping the church pure - of keeping unclean things out of the church - the building and its people. But this week I want us to challenge our perception of what Jesus is referring to when he says, "Stop making my Father's house a market-place!", especially in light of his conclusion that the temple of which he was speaking was not the building, but his own body.

For is not the entire created world the House of God? Does not God live, move, and breathe in everything God created? Standing on the top of a mountain, looking out at a beautiful valley - you are standing in the House of God. Standing on the edge of the beach, watching the sun slowly set over the waters - you are standing in the House of God. Because you see, in the

cleansing of the temple, of God's house, Jesus was no more simply referring to that physical space than he was when he spoke of rebuilding it in 3 days.

So what does it mean to cleanse the world then? This is the challenge for us this week - when we think of the cleansing that needs to go on, yes, we need to think about this in our own lives, in our own churches. But also in all our world. With all the decisions we make and actions we take. With the decisions we ask our policymakers to make. When we make personal decisions about our homes, our personal habits - are we considering their impact on God's House? When we organize our worship, build our church buildings - what understanding of God's House are we living out? When we consider our land, endangered species, climate legislation -are we taking care to cleanse God's house? Or are the money-changers still in the temple?

Guiding Questions

Looking out at our world today, what kind of cleansing needs to take place? What would it look like to throw the money changers out of God's House?

Our epistle this morning challenges worldly concepts of wisdom, and definitions of what is possible. If we believe in a God who created out of nothing, a God who raises from the dead, and a God who re-creates everyday - what does this say to the world about what is possible in terms of renewing our planet?

Daily Actions

Sunday, March 15th - Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Monday, March 16th - Today, the Senate will vote to protect millions of acres of God's Creation. Click [here](#) to tell your Senators of the importance of treating the land as the House of God, and the importance of protecting and caring for that house.

Tuesday, March 17th - This week is [End Mountaintop Removal Week](#) in Washington DC, and hundreds of people from across the country are coming to call on Congress to put an end to this method of mining that destroys so much of God's Creation. This year, the week is focused on the recently introduced [Clean Water Protection Act, HR 1310](#). Today is a National Call in Day to support the folks in DC. Call your House Representative at 202-224-3121, or click [here](#) to send them an email.

Wednesday, March 18th - This Sunday is World Water Sunday. Click [here](#) for a worship and education resource to consider the waters of the world as part of God's temple, too.

Thursday, March 19th - Return to the lectionary texts for this week. What new emerges from a second reading of them? Try reading them with a group, seeing what new insights come forth.

Friday, March 20th - The products we use in our home are also reflections of what we consider to be a temple - and they are often toxic. Last Thursday the [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#) released [No More Toxic Tub](#). the first report of its kind to find formaldehyde and

1,4 dioxane contamination in a wide variety of children's personal care products ranging from bubble bath to lotion to shampoo and hair relaxers. Click [here](#) to read the report, and consider the products you use.

Saturday, March 21st - Help your church better reflect its place in the House of God, by reducing the amount of carbon it produces. Click [here](#) to take part in our Carbon Reduction Campaign - and win prizes!

Click [here](#) to download our reflection for the fourth Sunday in Lent in PDF form.

Lectionary Text: John 3:14-21 (NRSV)

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

Other Lectionary Readings: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10

Reflection

This is the set of verses that is often cited as foundational to the Christian faith. This is what it is all about. "For God so loved the world..." And that is absolutely true. But why do we so often stop the reading there? We tend to get to the part where we who believe are granted eternal life – but miss the responsibility that comes in the very next sentence. You see, the reason Christ came into this world was to empower us, through the gift of eternal life, use that gift, "so that the world might be saved through him." This is not simply a passage about individual belief – about whether or not we believe. It is about what we do with that belief! No longer is this passage one of individual salvation, but one that focuses on the power of that salvation to bring the transformative healing of Christ into the world. It is a challenge to each of us, who do believe, to see the world through the eyes of Christ, and to seek not to condemn it, but to save it. This also starts by referencing the serpent in the wilderness, with Moses (the Hebrew Bible lectionary text for this week) – a serpent whose power was to heal.

This is the power we have through Christ – the power through our belief to heal the world. We are challenged to look at the world with the eyes of Christ. That is why God sent Christ. So that we may have the life that heals the world. So that we may be empowered to continue the healing and transformative work that Christ began. And, my friends, we have work to do.

Guiding Questions

1. What does it mean that Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it? What kind of implications does that have for how we live our lives?
2. Are the ways in which we live reflective of the light of Christ? Can the light of Christ be seen in us? How do we live that out? What does it look like, daily?

Daily Actions

Sunday, March 22nd – Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Monday, March 23rd– Part of this challenge is changing our personal lives to represent the transformation that has occurred within us, and which we seek in the world. Click [here](#) to view a Carbon Footprint quiz, and see what changes you can make!

Tuesday, March 24th – The next step is to transform the practices of your church. Click [here](#) for resources on Green Building, and see what steps your church can make to better reflect this transformation, and to participate in the healing.

Wednesday, March 25th–Today, the House will vote to protect millions of acres of God’s Creation. Click [here](#) to tell your Representatives of the importance of protecting our public lands as a part of the healing of all of Creation.

Thursday, March 26th – Return to the lectionary texts for this week. What new emerges from a second reading of them? Try reading them with a group, seeing what new insights come forth.

Friday, March 27th – Consider how the items we buy, and the products we use, everyday can contribute to this healing. Click [here](#) to download our Mindful Living resource, along with a gathering guide, to encourage those around you to do the same.

Saturday, March 28th – This Saturday, takes steps toward participating in healing the world by joining Earth Hour, and turning off all your lights for one hour. Click [here](#) for more information. Click [here](#) to download our reflection for the fourth Sunday in Lent in PDF form.

Lectionary Text: Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NRSV)

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: 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. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Other Lectionary Readings: Psalm 51; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

Reflection

A little later in the book of Hebrews than our text for this week (Chapter 8), this Jeremiah passage is cited, with the naming of Jesus Christ as the new covenant of God – the covenant that is written on our hearts. What does this mean? It means we have the challenge of living in this way – of knowing, in our hearts, what we are supposed to do. We are living with the knowledge that God has forgiven us – our sins are no longer remembered. The challenge is then to live lives reflective of that. To be able to get past what we have done, and begin to re-imagine what could be. To view the world with the mind of Christ – with the covenant that is on our hearts. Recognizing that we live as forgiven beings, transformed through the covenant of God being written on our hearts, changes the way we live with the world and interact with the world. It doesn't mean that we are going to get it right all the time, but it means when we get it wrong, we are forgiven. It means we live in a world in the midst of constant transformation. And it means that we should be asking the question, in all that we do, whether or not we are living out this covenant. When we are deciding how to get to place to place, what do buy at the grocery store, whether or not to recycle that bottle ... our decisions should be reflective of having the covenant of God on our hearts – at the core of our being.

Guiding Questions

1. How does it change what is possible for you, knowing that your sins are forgotten?
2. Combine this ability to live transformed lives with the challenge in our gospel passage about not loving our lives. What does this say to you in terms of how you make decisions on a day to day basis?

Daily Actions – The goal of the actions for this week are to consider how our lives can be more reflective of the covenant on our hearts – from our personal commitment, to the way our government makes laws, to our personal connection with God, to our energy use.

Sunday, March 29th – Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Monday, March 30th – Part of a covenant is a commitment on our part. Click [here](#) to join our carbon reduction campaign, and commit yourself to taking concrete steps toward living with the heart of God.

Tuesday, March 31st – Involve your church in considering how taking care of God's Creation is a vital part of this covenant, by using our 2009 Earth Day resource – *Celebrating and Caring for God's Creation*. Click [here](#) for a free download.

Wednesday, April 1st – On this April Fools Day, we remember how two years ago, Congress approved the waiving of more than 35 laws in order to expedite the building of the Border Fence, including the Endangered Species Act. Click [here](#) for more information, and click [here](#) to take action and call attention to this issue.

Thursday, April 2nd – Return to the lectionary texts for this week. What new emerges from a second reading of them? Try reading them with a group, seeing what new insights come forth.

Friday, April 3rd – This past week, Congress passed legislation creating the National Landscape Conservation System – making permanent protections for over 26 million acres of God’s Creation. Click [here](#) to read more, and [here](#) to explore these areas you can go to sit with and experience God.

Saturday, March 28th – This week, the EPA took steps at reducing Mountaintop Removal Mining – protecting communities, streams and rivers, and acres of land. The Appalachia Restoration Act was also introduced in the Senate. Click [here](#) for more information on Mountaintop Removal, and [here](#) to see how much of your energy consumption comes from the practice. Click [here](#) to download our reflection for Palm Sunday.

Lectionary Text: Mark 11:1-11 (NRSV)

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." ' They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Other Lectionary Readings: Psalm 118

Reflection

It is a challenge to look at Palm Sunday and not look ahead to Easter. To know the week that this story is the preamble for. But, lets try to do that for just a minute. Imagine this event - here comes the son of a carpenter, riding a colt - and having Hosanna's shouted at him! What an amazing scene. And, it is not just that they are proclaiming Hosanna - with this declaration they are also proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom. It is named here a couple of ways - the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the coming kingdom of our ancestor David. They are singing the praises of the fulfillment of God's promises!



So, what does this mean? It certainly wasn't the kingdom they were expecting on Palm Sunday that came (here I go, looking ahead - I told you it was hard!). But, those promises are fulfilled in a very different way - and one that has no fewer impacts on the way in which we live our lives. If the promise of God, the coming of the Kingdom, is realized in Jesus Christ - as this story symbolizes - then it is to us to carry on the fulfillment of those promises.

As was noted last week - those promises, that Kingdom, now lives in our hearts. And it is through that power that we call this world into being. That we try to bring the world around us, the one we can impact, into accordance with the Creation, the reality, that God called good. It means adjusting the way we have lived for a long time, and seeking the reality of the Kingdom in everything that we do. In our shopping decisions, our relationships with other people and all of Creation, what we expect of our government, and more.

Palm Sunday reminds us that the Kingdom of God is here - the promise fulfilled. What that presents to us is an opportunity to celebrate, a challenge to live into, and the power with which to do so.

Guiding Questions

What does it mean to you that God's promises have been fulfilled?

What does it look like to live in a way that constantly praises God - as both this gospel passage and the Psalm do? What implications does this have for the way we treat Creation?

Daily Actions

Sunday, April 5th - Spend some time in reflection with the passages above, and the reflections. Center yourself for the Lenten journey.

Monday, April 6th - Plan to celebrate God and God's Creation this Earth Day (April 22nd) - or the Sunday on either side. Click [here](#) to download our 2009 Earth Day Resource - *Celebrating and Caring For God's Creation*.

Tuesday, April 7th - This week, your representatives are home on recess. Give a visit to your local office, or attend a local town hall, and emphasize the importance of taking action on climate change. Click [here](#) for more.

Wednesday, April 8th - As you begin to enter one of the holiest stretches on the Christian calendar - Maundy Thursday through Easter Sunday, consider how the products we buy affect human health. Click [here](#) to send a letter to the editor on toxics in children's products.

Click [here](#) to download our reflection for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Maundy Thursday

Lectionary Text: John 13:1-17, 31b-35 (NRSV)

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one

another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Other Lectionary Readings: Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14; Psalm 116, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Reflection

This reading brings to mind for me, almost instantly, the plight those living in poverty face from environmental degradation. Whether it be the threats of climate change, the toxic fumes of factories often located in low income communities, or the destruction of native lands being done by the border fence, I think these realities say something about whether or not the world recognizes us as disciples of the one who knelt and washed feet.

What does it say about our love of others as ourselves when are willing to use more than our fair share of resources, as people in the United States consistently do? What does it say when we are willing to waive more than 30

environmental laws to expedite building the border fence? It seems to me that, when it comes to our care for God's Creation, and those living in poverty due to our lack of care, that we have forgotten the example of Maundy Thursday. The example of kneeling, and washing the feet of another. Of being willing to humble ourselves, and display love for the rest of Creation. To do the work of the Servant for the betterment of all.

Love one another – through serving. It is how the world will be able to identify us as disciples of Jesus Christ. And one of the most telltale signs of that love may well be how we care for the rest of God's Creation.

Guiding Questions

1. How do you think caring for God's Creation shows servant love for one another?
2. The passage in 1st Corinthians reminds us of the New Covenant of the blood of Christ. How does Creation Care play into how we live that covenant out?

Daily Action

To get a better handle on the impact you have on the degradation of Creation, take a quiz to establish your environmental footprint. And then seek out actions that could show better love of others and Creation.

Good Friday

Lectionary Reading: Isaiah 52:13—53:12

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him —so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals— so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich,

although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Other Lectionary Texts: Psalm 22, Hebrews 10:16-25, John 18:1-19:42

Reflection:

What did Jesus die for? Why the violence of Good Friday? For what purpose?

So that we might have the ability to live in right relationship with God and the whole of the created world. On this day, we remember the terrible violence that was the ultimate result of humanities separation from God, and inability to live in relationship with God and through God with each other. This text, lived out in our gospel reading for this day from John, put on display the result of failed relationships of human beings, and ultimately separation from the Creator.

In this is also the ultimate challenge of Good Friday. Good Friday allows us to live out the promise of Palm Sunday and Easter. The kingdom of God has come to all of us, and we are now called to live in communion with God through Jesus Christ, and thus mirror right relationship with the rest of God's Creation. It challenges us to break out of the way we have been living – that has continued to perpetrate separation from the Divine and lack of relationship with the world around us. It has brought about an ever expanding list of endangered species, communities in the Pacific Ocean seeing their communities swallowed up by rising waters, and forests around the world decimated by clear-cutting.

Jesus died so that the world may have life – and that we may be able to bring that life out. By communing with God, remembering the Kingdom that Jesus brought into this world – one that turns over the tables of the money changers, kneels and washes feet, and loves one another – we are called to right relationship with Creation. This is the challenge of Good Friday for us all.

Guiding Questions:

1. What does living in right relationship with the rest of Creation look like to you?
2. What does it mean that we are able to commune with the Divine?

Daily Action:

Commune with the Divine today, in God's Creation. Visit a state or national park, or click [here](#) to find a place in the newly established National Landscape Conservation System, and learn from God in the wilderness.

Easter Sunday

Lectionary Reading: Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Other Lectionary Texts: Isaiah 25:6-9, Psalm 118, 1st Corinthians 15:1-11

Reflection:

Oh, the celebration! All the other texts for this week, the feast of Isaiah, the praise of the Psalm, and the call to belief of 1st Corinthians, celebrate what God did on this Holy Day. And, celebrate we should. But, in the Mark passage, there wasn’t much celebration – not yet.

They were afraid. Sometimes I think we are still afraid – afraid of what this means. Afraid of the reality of the empty tomb. No longer is our human nature an excuse for inaction. God has overcome it. This doesn’t mean we will always get it right – but it means that our faith compels us to try. To try to live in right relationship with all of God’s Creation. To try to commune with God, and love one another as God has loved us. With grace, servanthood, and sacrifice. The empty tomb means we, my friends, have work to do.

The promise of Palm Sunday has become reality one week later. The coming of the kingdom is complete – God has overcome the separation of human beings, and reconciled us with Godself, and enabled us to live out that reconciliation with Creation. But we are afraid – for it is our very reality and way of life that is at stake. The empty tomb calls us to examine our lives, and in light of the promise empty tomb holds. Does the way we live our t the empty tomb holds. Does the way we live our lives proclaim the celebration of the feast of the Lord, praise God? This is the challenge of the empty tomb. It is the fear of Mary and Mary. And it is our fear. So, during our celebration, don’t back away from that fear. Look at it, and find new life through the overcoming of it!

Guiding Questions:

1. What feelings does the reality of the empty tomb invoke within you?
2. What do you fear about it?
3. What does the empty tomb enable you to do?

Daily Action:

Celebrate today! Celebrate the empty tomb – plant a tree, change all your light bulbs, take a hike. Click [here](#) for other ways to physically make the empty tomb a reality in your faith community.