



Rise
up

my
love

My lover spoke to me and said,
"rise up my love, my beautiful one, and come with me.

See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.

Flowers appear on the earth;
the season of singing has come,
the cooing of doves
is heard in our land.

The fig tree forms its early fruit;
The blossoming vines spread their fragrance.
Rise up my love, my beautiful one, and come with me."

The Song of Solomon 2:10–13

Introduction

So, what are you "doing" for Lent this year?

Perhaps you will give up a favorite food or abstain from alcohol. Maybe you will engage in various works of charity; vow to read the Bible daily, pray more frequently, practice some form of a daily devotion (such as using the meditations in this Lenten booklet).

While the practice of various Lenten disciplines is perfectly fine, I have often wondered why we "do" these extra spiritual activities in the Lenten season. Is it possible that Lenten disciplines are a way of winning extra points with God?

Of course, we never need to win points with God because God can't possibly love us more than he already does. God is a God of abiding and amazing grace who wants us to be fully alive and at peace.

When we are selfish and sinful and isolated, we cannot be alive nor at peace and so, in Lent, we turn from sin so that God's desire for our welfare can be fulfilled.

So, this year instead of focusing upon what **you** are doing for Lent, I suggest that we all might consider what **God** is doing for Lent. This Lent, God is searching for us, desiring us, and calling us into life.

Throughout this Lenten booklet, I will be using a theme from the beautiful love poem found in the "Song of Solomon." God is the lover and each of us is the beloved-God's own beautiful one. In this season, God calls us to new life. God calls us to die to all that would keep us dead inside and to rise up to all that gives us life.

This Lent, let the seed of sinfulness fall to earth and die that new life might spring up.

Listen to the voice of the Holy One, "Rise up my love, and come with me."

Ash Wednesday

February 17, 2010

Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return
prayer at the imposition of ashes

Lent begins each year with this rather sobering reminder of our mortality. These fragile bodies shall indeed return to dust someday.

At first blush it may seem it may seem a little macabre to place ashes on the head and remind people that they are going to die someday. In fact, when I was a young priest I used to resist placing ashes on the heads of children for fear of frightening them.

But the fact is that life goes by very quickly. And whether we like it or not, we all are going to die someday. Lent, therefore isn't a time to fear death or to get ready for death—it's a time to remind one another to use our time on earth wisely and joyfully. Lent is a time to remind us to start living this life fully.

As you begin the Lenten season, think about those areas of your life that keep you from being alive and free. Are you stingy or selfish or maybe addicted in some way? Are you manipulative or jealous or angry? What keeps you from being fully alive?

Remember you are dust. Remember, we are all going to die someday. So don't put off "living" any longer. Lent is a time to become fully alive.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

February 18, 2010

For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit anyone if he gains the whole world and forfeits himself? Luke 9:25

As I see it, the one major factor, which keeps us separated from God and out of relationship with others, is this gnawing need to be "in control." This need to "control" serves as an underlying force, which governs the lives of so many people in contemporary society.

The degree to which a person needs to be “in control” is the very measure of how much “ego” dominates your life. The person who insists that life must conform to his or her plan has no need for God and little need for others.

But, the truth is that, even if we want to be always “in control” all the time, that’s just not how life works. No matter what we may have planned, life just mostly comes at us. Good things may happen, bad things may occur and many (if not most times) the circumstances of life are out of our control.

But all is not chaos, for at the heart of everything is the living Spirit of the ever present God. Love is at the heart of life, and it is love that keeps it all together. So, the good news is that, even when you aren’t able to control life—maybe you don’t have to and maybe you don’t even want to. God who is unbounded Love is the Lord of the universe. This is all I need to know to live a life of peace.

As you begin the season of Lent, surrender your ego and jump into the loving arms of the God who desires you more than you can ever ask or imagine.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

February 19, 2010

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free? Is not this the fast I choose: to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house and to cover the naked? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up speedily. Isaiah 58:6–7

I’ve often thought that Lent has the potential to be a season to foster a good deal of self-righteousness. I know many people who take great pride in their ability to follow the rigors of a Lenten discipline. Giving up certain foods or drink or eating less can easily turn into a dangerous source of spiritual “preening” in which we might see one’s self as spiritually superior to others.

Today’s scripture passage from the prophet Isaiah quickly bursts the bubble of self-righteousness, which might result from engaging in Lenten disciplines.

The kind of fast God desires involves giving ourselves for the good of others. God would probably prefer you serve a hungry person at the soup kitchen than to eat a sparse meal yourself.

God wants us to "spring up" - to live full and joyful lives. When we die to our selfishness and self-righteousness and extend ourselves for the other's good, we spring up, we rise up.

What can you do today so that you too can "spring up"?

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

February 20, 2010

Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.

Matthew 10:17

It's good to have patterns and routines in life. For example, for years now, I have spent every Saturday morning going to breakfast with my spouse. However, there are other places in my life where my routines are much more like ruts.

Over time, relationships (even real important ones) can grow dull. Work or school can become boring. When you are stuck in a rut, spiritual life and relationship with God can also turn bland.

God is always trying to infuse us with new life, but maybe we can't receive that new life because our old wineskins just won't let the new life in.

On this Saturday in early Lent, look at your life and see if you are stuck in a rut. Maybe you have "always done it that way" but maybe you should do it another way. Maybe it's time to change the wineskins.

The First Sunday in Lent

February 21, 2010

You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes in noonday... For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. Psalm 91

This is the Psalm appointed for this First Sunday in Lent, and it so perfectly captures the spirit of this season.

God is not an angry God. God is not out to get you. God is not on the lookout to find and mark your faults so that you can be punished in kind. Lent is not the season to make amends before God dashes you into the stones.

In today's psalm, we hear echoes of the true spirit of the lover God—the lover of our souls. Our God is indeed on the lookout for us, but God is looking for us that we might be raised us up rather than crushed down.

We may indeed live in a world of chaos, plagued by wars, natural disasters, personal or family problems, but we need not be afraid of these night terrors. Angels are holding us up, lest we will dash our foot against a stone.

On this First Sunday of Lent, do not be afraid!

Monday in the First Week of Lent

February 22, 2010

The Lord said to Moses, "say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, you shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Leviticus 19:1–2

In today's assigned lectionary reading, Moses speaks to the people in the wilderness as they journey to the Promised Land. He tells them to be holy just like God is holy.

When you think about it, this seems like a rather odd command, doesn't it? After all, God is so far superior to us in all ways, so beyond us that we can never even have adequate words to describe God. And yet Moses commands the people to be holy as God is holy.

The obvious question here is "what does it mean to say that God is holy?" Holiness actually means "wholeness"—being in harmony. When we say God is holy, we are saying that the essence of God is harmony. God is a dynamic relationship. The relationship of God is so harmonious as to form a perfect unity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dancing as The One in the midst of creation, holding it all together.

The call to be holy as God is holy is a reminder that we are all made in the image of God. Since God is a perfect harmonious relationship, we (the creatures) are created as relationship. The call to holiness is a call to wholeness and harmony.

On this day of Lent reflect upon where you are not whole. Think about your relationship with others. Meditate upon where and how your life is connected (or unconnected). And, if there are areas where you are broken, divided, ruptured, do your best to connect again.

Be holy as God is holy.

Tuesday in the First Week of Lent

The Feast of Saint Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr

February 23, 2010

Lord God Almighty, Father of your beloved and blessed child, Jesus Christ. . . I bless you that you have thought me worthy of this day, to be numbered among the martyrs and share in the cup of Christ. Polycarp before his martyrdom

My guess is most people have never even heard about Saint Polycarp. He was born in 69 A.D. and became the Bishop of Smyrna (present day Turkey). On February 23, in the year 156 A.D. Polycarp was burned at the stake for refusing to renounce his faith in Christ, thus becoming one of the first Christian martyrs.

Tertullian once wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." While Polycarp may not be a recognizable name for most people today, his life, and the lives of those early martyrs, was extremely influential in the growth and spread of Christianity in those beginning days. After all, if someone was willing to be tortured and die for this newly emerging Christian faith, there must be something to it. Polycarp's willingness to die rather than renounce his faith was a living testimony to the life-changing significance of embracing Christianity and his example won many converts.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (a more recent martyr) once said, "A person who won't die for something is not fit to live." Perhaps many of us find life dull because we are so apathetic about it. And perhaps we find our own faith so lackluster at times because our level of commitment to Christ and to his kingdom is so lukewarm.

On this Feast of Polycarp, ask yourself how strongly you have committed yourself to Christ and everything he stands for. Are you willing to give your life for the sake of building the kingdom of God in which the dignity of

everyone is respected? Or is Christ and His kingdom just a Sunday morning hobby?

"A person who won't die for something isn't fit to live."

Wednesday in the First Week of Lent **The Feast of Saint Matthias the Apostle**

February 24, 2010

Almighty God, who in the place of Judas chose your faithful servant Matthias, to be numbered among the Twelve: Grant that your church, being delivered from false apostles, may always be guided and governed by faithful and true pastors.

The Collect from Saint Matthias' Day

Today is Saint Matthias' Day. Like Polycarp, many people hardly even recognize his name even though he was the one who was chosen to take the place of Judas as one of the twelve apostles.

In a sense, the replacement of Judas, and the election of Matthias as an apostle, is the first instance of "apostolic succession." As Anglicans we affirm that our church is in the historic apostolic succession. Traditionally, this means that our bishops are in a line of succession, which dates back to those first Apostles.

There, is however, another way of thinking about historic succession. In a very real sense, all baptized people are part of an apostolic and historic succession. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist together, we can trace our heritage back to the primitive gatherings of those first apostolic Christian communities, who likewise, took bread and wine and bread in memory of Jesus.

Likewise, that same commission given by Jesus to his apostles - to continue his work on this earth- is also a commission that has been passed on to us through our baptism.

On this Lenten Feast of an Apostle, remember that you are also an apostle in the historic succession.

Saint Matthias, pray for us. All you holy apostles pray for us that we might be given the grace to carry on your work.

Thursday in the First Week of Lent

February 25, 2010

Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.

Matthew 7:7

In his book of meditations on the season of Lent, Sam Portaro suggests, "Lent is a particularly dangerous time for us. It is dangerous because we might succeed at our self-imposed disciplines and in that success be tempted to withdraw even further into our self-sufficiency." (Daysprings, p.83)

You know that old stereotype about men not being unwilling to ask for directions? Well, when I think about myself, there is more truth to this observation than stereotype. I wonder why I am unwilling to ask for directions? Maybe it's because it somewhat obligates me or it demonstrates that I am not in control.

Jesus invites us to ask, and seek, and come knocking because when we do this we demonstrate that we need God, and we need one another. We are not self-sufficient but rather we are interdependent.

On this day in Lent reflect upon the degree to which you think you are self-sufficient. Come before God and ask for directions. Seek out others and tell them what you need.

Seek and you shall find.

Friday in the First Week in Lent

February 26, 2010

I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, I would rather that he should turn from his way and live.

Ezekiel 18:21-28

As you read this lectionary passage assigned for today, what picture of God comes to mind?

Many people have a very austere picture of God as a vindictive judge or harsh task master who expects us to do what He tells us to do, or else. So, if we comply with God's demands, we then expect reward and avoid punishment.

But this isn't the picture of God whom the prophet Ezekiel presents to us today. Ezekiel is a prophet who is speaking to Jews in exile. They have been captured by a foreign power and sent to live in Babylon. Through the words of Ezekiel, God tells his beloved ones that this isn't what God wants for them. God is the lover who desires that God's beloved be fully alive and not in slavery.

Can you hear that message on this day in Lent? Can those words speak to the deepest places of your soul? Can those words especially speak to those places where you feel dry and enslaved?

God wants you to be fully alive. You don't have to placate or perform for God, the lover of our souls. God wants more for us than we want for ourselves.

Saturday of the First Week in Lent

February 27, 2010

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Matthew 5:43

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Dr. King was a true disciple of Jesus wasn't he?

When any sort of evil is perpetrated against us, our first reaction is to strike back with even greater force. We are insulted, and we lash back with even greater insult. We are rejected, and we wash our hands of the person who did us wrong. We are attacked in a battle, and in return we wage a war.

But I think Jesus had the right idea, and Martin King really expresses this idea well with the observation that more darkness doesn't cast out the darkness.

On this day in Lent, can you think of someone who is an enemy? Can you forgive the enemy and pray for the one who persecutes you? If so, maybe the light can enter in.

Only love can cast out hate.

The Second Sunday in Lent

February 28, 2010

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing. Luke 13:31–35

Every time I read this passage appointed as the Gospel for this Sunday in Lent, I get a bit teary-eyed.

Jesus is sitting on a hill outside the city and lamenting over the difference between what God wants for us and what we are willing to let God do for us.

God's dream for us is that we be a people of compassion, deeply connected to one another. God desires to bring us together under her wings—under the fluttering wings of the Holy Spirit. But we are not willing.

This passage from Luke contains what are perhaps the saddest words in the Scriptures, "you were not willing."

We are now well into the season of Lent. We started out with the invitation of the lover to the beloved, "arise my love, my beautiful one, and come with me." Can we hear this Lenten call echo in the deepest recesses of who we are? Can we surrender to the power of the Spirit who wants to gather us together as a hen gathers her brood?

Today, make this your Lenten prayer, "Yes, Lord. Yes, I am willing."

Monday in the second Week of Lent

The Feast of Saint David of Wales

March 1, 2010

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how."
Mark 4:26

David was a monk, and abbot, and a bishop in 6th century Wales. He became the guardian of the Christian faith in that country and is widely accepted as the saint who established Christianity in Wales. To this day he is the patron saint of the Welsh people.

I am intrigued by the Gospel passage appointed for David's feast day. In this passage from Mark's Gospel we learn that the Kingdom of God is planted by scattering the seeds of the kingdom wherever one might go, then waiting to see what springs up.

I bet David would be shocked at his fame over the years. I'm sure he'd be amazed to think that people would be remembering him and his work centuries after his death. The stories about David consistently report that he was a modest man. He simply did the work God had given him to do. He got up in the morning and said his prayers. He taught and preached and engaged in works of charity and compassion. He scattered the kingdom seeds wherever he would go. And, today, this modest man is remembered as the chief saint among the Welsh people.

On this Saint David's Day, in this season of Lent, what kind of seeds are you scattering around in your everyday life? Are you sewing the seeds of the kingdom-seeds of love and mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation?

You never know where or how these kingdom seeds will sprout up.

Tuesday in the Second Week of Lent

March 2, 2010

He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matthew 23:12

This one little saying of Jesus summarizes almost everything Jesus ever taught.

Centuries before Jesus, God made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah. In this covenant God announced his vision for everyone and everything God had created. From the beginning God created everything as a harmonious relationship with all the many differences working together as one perfect "shalom."

God's plan for us human beings is that we should live in a world of justice where no one is a second-class citizen- where all the many differences work together as a perfect "shalom."

So, whenever mighty powers cast away the meek and oppress the lowly, we are out of sync with creation-contrary to God's plan for us all.

Jesus came among us to rekindle God's plan and reignite God's vision for His people. Jesus came among us to plant a "new world order" which would be "in sync" with the way we have been created. That's why he taught about leveling the playing field of life so that the lowly might be lifted up to a place of dignity and the mighty would sit at the same table with those who had been lifted up.

On this day in Lent, who do you know who is oppressed? Who do you know who has been cast off into the margins of life? Where do you see injustice? More importantly, what are you going to do about it?

Wednesday in the second Week of Lent

The Feast of John and Charles Wesley

March 3, 2010

Lord God, you inspired your servants John and Charles Wesley with burning zeal for the sanctification of souls, and endowed them with eloquence in speech and song. Kindle in your church, we entreat you, such fervor, that those whose faith has cooled may be warmed.

The Collect for the Feast of John and Charles Wesley

Although we credit John and Charles Wesley with being the founders of the Methodist church, they were also Anglican priests who had no intention of establishing a new church but rather sought to reform a failing English church in the 18th century.

In the middle of the 1700's the English church had fallen into serious decline, becoming a rigid and brittle institution, more concerned with preserving buildings and doctrines than with building a holy relationship with God and serving the needs of people.

Attendance in churches was dismal and the life of the church had become lukewarm at best.

John and Charles were determined to breathe new life into the dying institution. They preached on street corners and in local pubs. They establish small groups for prayer, personal conversion, and spiritual growth. They established missions to help the poor and needy. They even wrote rousing new hymns. Arguably, the work of the Wesley brothers saved the English church from extinction.

The church in every age and in every era is always in need of renewal and reform. My guess is that most of the people who are using this Lenten meditation book are churchgoers. So, on this Feast of the Wesley brothers, remember what church is all about—it's all about relationships. Our relationship with God, our relationship with one another and our relationship with those in need.

If buildings, doctrines, rites and rituals are more important to you than relationships, maybe you need to re-think what "church" is really all about.

Blessed John and Charles, pray for us that we might ever be renewed.

Thursday in the Second Week of Lent

March 4, 2010

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. He is like a tree planted by the water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. Jeremiah 17:5–10

There are many times in our life when things get heated up and we feel all parched and dried up.

The economic times are hard. Perhaps you have experienced sickness or misfortune of some kind. Maybe, when you think about the state of the world with its wars and terrors and natural disasters, you feel twinges of fear. It may just be that life seems dry because it's dull.

Dryness and even scorching heat is part of the human condition. Jeremiah was speaking to people who lived in a desert climate (much like ours), and so people could easily identify with his imagery of scorching heat and dryness.

But Jeremiah reminds us that God doesn't want us to be dried up. In fact, God is a source of life giving refreshment. In this passage from Jeremiah, we are called to surrender to the life-giving power of God—especially when trouble comes along. Put down roots into the Holy Presence and the Holy Power of the ever-abiding Spirit who lives in our midst, and the leaves of our lives will always be green.

What about you on this Thursday in the wilderness of Lent? What does your life look like? Are there places where it's all hot and dry? If so, send out your spiritual roots to the stream of living water in whom we live and move and have our being.

May your leaves always be green!

Friday in the second Week of Lent

March 5, 2010

Then Midianite traders passed by, and they drew Joseph up, lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver, and they took Joseph into Egypt.

Genesis 37:12–28

Do you remember the Old Testament story of Joseph? He is one of Jacob's twelve children. Joseph's brothers are jealous of him because he is Jacob's favorite son and so they try to kill him. They leave him for dead in an empty well, but Joseph has not died and he is discovered by Midianite traders and sold to the Ishmaelites as a slave, and he winds up in Egypt.

Then, the story takes on an ironic twist. The slave Joseph rises up in the ranks and becomes an assistant to Pharaoh, who appoints him to the important post of overseeing food distribution.

Lo and behold there is a great famine in Joseph's homeland. The old patriarch Jacob and his other eleven sons are starving to death. If they die off, there will be no people of Israel because Jacob and his family are the seeds for the nation to come. They travel to Egypt looking for food. Of course they think that Joseph is long since dead, but to their amazement, they discover that Joseph is very much alive, and, moreover, he is in charge of food distribution.

Joseph reconciles with his brothers, feeds and cares for them. From them will come the nation of Israel.

This important Old Testament story is one we should never forget. It's all about God turning "lemons into lemonade." God made a promise (a covenant) to Abraham that his descendants would live and thrive and become a nation. God always keeps His promises.

God has made a promise to us. We are the people of the New Covenant. God has sent us Jesus who has given us His Holy Spirit. We are never abandoned

or deserted even in the darkest of times. So even when all seems lost, God finds a way to keep promises.

The story of Joseph is a great Lenten story—go back and re-read it. Think of where you have sinned, turned away from God, sold your brother into slavery and believe that even in your worst moment, God will never desert you.

Saturday in the Second Week of Lent

March 6, 2010

But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. . . The father said "bring the finest robe, put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, kill the fatted calf and let us make merry. For my son was dead and is alive again" . . . Now the elder son was in the field and as he came near to the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing and was told that his brother had come home and his father was giving him a party. The elder son became angry and said to his father, "lo these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a party to make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours who has devoured your living came home, you killed the fatted calf" Luke 15:11–32

On this Saturday in Lent we read the story of the Prodigal Son. Actually before you read on here I suggest that you go to your Bible and re-read this familiar passage from Luke's Gospel.

At first glance, it's a story about deep, unabashed, unrestricted love. The boy has failed miserably. He has turned away from his father and squandered his inheritance. But the Father is an icon of unrestricted forgiveness. Nothing can ever stop him from loving his child, and so he welcomes him home without question.

But the end of the story has a twist to it—a twist, which may provide us with an even more powerful theme than that of unrestricted forgiveness.

The father is having a welcome home party for his prodigal child and the elder brother is "fit to be tied." The older brother has been faithful and has always done the right thing—why should this returning (albeit repentant) younger sibling be treated better than him? He feels that the younger boy should earn back his dad's respect. He should be punished for his disobedience. It just doesn't seem fair.

Maybe our real lesson in this story resides in the “twist” at the end of it. I wonder how many of us might come closer to identifying with the elder brother in the story. We go to church. We work hard to do what is right. God should love us more.

But God isn’t fair. God is a God of total mercy and amazing grace. God cannot love anyone more than another because God loves us all with equal embrace.

It’s not fair. But it sure is wonderful!

The Third Sunday in Lent

March 7, 2010

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener “for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and have found none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting soil?” He replied, “sir, let it alone for one more year until I dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, if not you can have it cut down.” Luke 13:6–8

Today’s appointed Gospel parable has echoes of the sentiments of Ash Wednesday in it. It reminds us that we are dust and the time we are given for our life is limited.

We don’t have endless days to produce the good fruit of compassion or mercy or forgiveness. These good fruits give us joy in life and bring us freedom here and now. God wants us to enjoy “good fruits.”

Indeed, any one of us could die tomorrow and never have really tasted of the joy of life because we have been “putting off living.”

This day is the appointed day. This is the moment for you to grow the fruit of the Kingdom of God in your life. So, if you hold a grudge, today is the day to forgive. If you have done someone harm, this is the day to ask forgiveness. If you have been meaning to go and visit that sick neighbor, or if you have been meaning to see if you could mentor that child but just haven’t got around to it, this is the day to do it.

Today is a day to **get around to it**. Our time on earth is not endless—today is the day to grow the good fruit.

Monday in the Third Week of Lent

March 8, 2010

"As a deer longs for the flowing streams, so does my soul long for you O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Psalm 42

As a child I remember thinking that the Bible (especially the Old testament) was filled with harsh stories depicting God as a rather mean old man—a demanding judge.

It wasn't until I was an adult that I discovered that the Bible—especially the Old Testament was replete with tender and poignant love stories celebrating the passionate love between the creator and the created.

As we began the Lenten season we looked at that beautiful passage from the Song of Solomon in which God the lover calls out each of us—the beloved ones—and invites us to rise up and come into the holy embrace.

Today's psalm is one of those love poems about the soul eagerly wanting union with the God creator. Today, we recite this psalm as we look into our deepest selves and call back to the God who calls us.

We long for you, O God. We pine away for you.

Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent

March 9, 2010

Peter came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times but seventy times seven.' Matthew 18:21

Now don't try to read this appointed Gospel too literally. Jesus isn't saying that we should forgive those who wrong us up to 490 times (and then you can stop forgiving).

Jewish law called that you should forgive someone who offended you up to seven times. After that, the person could be essentially a life-long enemy. Jesus goes way beyond the law, and tells Peter that should forgive others just as God forgives us—without counting the cost, without limits.

The idea of even forgiving one person who has offended us is sometimes a bitter pill to swallow. Someone lies about you or slanders you or injures you

or a loved one and the first reaction is usually that of retribution, not mercy or forgiveness.

But the truth is that when we live with bitterness against another in our heart, it eats away at us. Retribution and the desire for vengeance, is like a disease, which festers and grows and can consume us.

On this day in Lent, is there someone in your life who you haven't yet forgiven? If so, make today a day of forgiveness. Do it seventy times seven!

Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent

March 10, 2010

The words of Moses came to all of Israel: "And now o Israel, give heed to the ordinances and statutes that I will teach you, and do them, that you may live." Deuteronomy 4:1

The Book of Deuteronomy is a book, which lists and comments upon Jewish law. The Jews had two basic laws—love God and love your neighbor. From these laws came the Ten Commandments, which if followed, would help you to love God and love your neighbor. They also had over 600 other laws, which were designed to help them follow the Ten Commandments. Today's passage tells faithful Jews that if they followed God's law, they would "live."

Why would following laws, help people "live"?

God's great hope for this creation is that we would be in perfect harmony with one another. God's dream is that there will be no slavery, no empire in which the mighty lord it over the weak. God's dream is that all humanity will someday sit at the table of a just world at which everyone has a place. That's why the core of all the law is "you shall love God with all your heart and soul and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

God's law for Jews and for us ultimately teach us that, if we surrender to the power of God, and take good care of one another (with special concern for those who are weaker and having a harder time), we will be living out God's dream for humanity. We were created to be in harmony with God and one another—when we live according to how we are created, we truly have "life."

On this day in Lent we are invited to be more fully alive. Surrender to God. Take good care of one another.

Do this that you may live.

Thursday in the Third Week of Lent

March 11, 2010

"Jesus said, He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters." Luke 11:23

Actually this little one liner, which Jesus delivers in the Gospel of this day, packs quite a wallop.

During the time of the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King was appalled by the indifference of so many of his fellow Christians who turned a blind eye to the plight of African Americans in the deep south. So many people remained indifferent, and out of fear or laziness, simply refused to actively oppose the oppression perpetrated against their fellow citizens.

Dr. King once said, "He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."

I think Jesus is saying the exact same thing in this Gospel today- if you are not with me, you are against me. Sometimes the silence of indifference roars much louder than perpetrating evil itself.

Where do you see injustice in the world? Where do you see oppression? Are you doing anything about it or do you turn a blind eye?

Be with Jesus or else you are against Him.

Friday in the Third Week of Lent

March 12, 2010

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. . . I will be as dew to Israel. You shall blossom as the lily, you shall strike root as the poplar; your shoots shall spread out, your beauty shall be like the olive and your fragrance like Lebanon... you shall flourish like a garden. Hosea 6:1-6

Once again we are treated to another of the many Old Testament love stories. This one comes from the prophet Hosea.

The prophet Hosea pictures God as the husband whose wife is Israel. But Israel has been unfaithful to the covenant. Israel has become a harlot. In the covenant between God and Israel, God promises to be faithful and expects the people to do the same. God expects the people to love God with all their

hearts and to treat one another as they would treat themselves. But, Israel has strayed from the covenant and turned to foreign gods. They have slid down the slippery slope of selfishness and have created an unjust society where the strong and rich lord it over and exploit the poor and lowly.

But God doesn't give up. God wants His wife back. God wants his beloved to be full of life and to flourish with the joy of producing the good fruits of fragrant compassion.

In this Lenten season, we look to those places where we have strayed from the love of God and the care of one another. We look to those parts of our lives in which we have strayed from our baptismal covenant. We look to where we have become the harlot.

And then we listen to the voice of the lover calling out once again to the beloved

"Rise up my love" come back to me.

Saturday of the Third Week in Lent

March 13, 2010

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed "God, thank you that I am not like others-extortionists, unjust, adulterers. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off would not even lift his eyes, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I tell you this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 18:9-24

I figure that most people who are using this Lenten booklet are more than likely church-going folks, and of course, I'm grateful for that. But once again we are reminded that there may be some pitfalls in being an active churchgoer.

Being a "religious" person may put you on somewhat of a slippery slope: "look at me, I say my prayers and give my tithes, unlike those lazy bums sitting at home reading the Times and sipping coffee." Sounds a bit like the Pharisee in the story today, don't you think?

The fact is that we are all sinners. Yes, even people who stand at an altar or sit in a pew- we are all sinners. We have all strayed. But hopefully we do not dwell on our sin but have been healed or are being healed. Someone once

said that the church is not a society of saints so much as it is a hospital for sinners.

On this day in Lent, put away any hint of smugness or self-righteousness, which may be tucked away in you. Say the prayer of the tax collector, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 14, 2010

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and scribes were grumbling and saying, "this fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So Jesus told them this parable: "Which of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices." Luke 15:1-5

This Sunday we hear this "Parable of the Lost Sheep" (along with a re-telling of the "Parable of the Prodigal Son").

At the very beginning of this season, I raised a question in this Lenten Booklet. I suggested that we often think about what we are "doing" for Lent and wondered if Lent might also be a season to reflect upon what God is "doing" for Lent.

So, have you thought about it? What is God doing for Lent? Today's Sunday Gospel pretty much answers that question.

God is on a search for us this Lent. Yes, that's what God is doing. God is looking for you and looking for me. God is searching out those places in our lives where we feel lost and alone. God is searching out the places in our lives where there is darkness and doubt or sin and fear, and God is looking to bring us back out of the darkness and into the loving warmth of His loving embrace.

Once again, listen to that call:

"Rise up my love—come to me, come back to me."

Are you ready to let God find you?

Monday of the Fourth Week in Lent

March 15, 2010

Thus says the Lord God: "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. . . . I will be glad in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in the land, nor the cry of distress. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Isaiah 65:17–25

There is a common and consistent theme, which runs throughout the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. If you have been using this Lenten booklet consistently, you have heard this theme repeated over and over: God has a dream for this created world, that there be harmony. God's dream is that all the many differences will be woven together as one. So, in this passage from the prophet Isaiah, we once again are treated to a vision of God's dream for the created order.

Of course, when we hear passages like the one appointed for today, it all sounds rather more like wishful thinking than a description of the way the world might actually look some day. Don't you think?

We live in a world in which we have ravished the environment, oppressed the poor, and waged war on our enemy. We live in a world where terrorism and fear seem to be the underlying themes of daily life.

But the good news is that Jesus came among us to help make God's dream come true. The power of darkness tried to kill the dream forever but His Spirit was resurrected and unleashed upon the world. So, we know that, even when it appears to be dark and even when it appears as if the dream has died, love is still very much in charge of this world.

God has a dream for us and beneath the surface of it all, God's dream is coming true.

May this day in Lent be a day of enduring hope for you.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week in Lent

March 16, 2010

Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will continually bear fresh fruit. . . . Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing. Ezekiel 47:1–9

Answer a question for me, will you please? Why does God get such a bad reputation, especially the God as we imagine him portrayed in the Old Testament? You've heard the TV preachers who speak on behalf of the God of judgment and threaten divine wrath and retribution for sinners.

Today, I feel like I just need to stand up and scream. I need to come to God's defense and yell "enough"! Read your Bible and see what kind of God has been revealed in those pages.

Over and over in this Lenten season we have feasted on the tender sweet words of the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments. Over and over we have seen a picture of a God of compassion who wants nothing more than we be filled with life and joy. Over and over we see the picture of a God who seeks us out to help us to live a full life of peace and joy. Over and over we have heard the voice of the lover seeking out the beloved. Read your Bible and this is the picture of God revealed to us.

In today's passage, the prophet Ezekiel speaks to Jews who are in exile in Babylon. They have lost everything. They have been sent into slavery. And God promises that the fruit of their lives will NOT wither away. People in exile may feel like they are withering away, but God won't let that happen. They will be restored.

So there I said it. Enough of blaming God for the problems that come our way. Enough for accusing God of being a hater. God is a God of pure compassion and amazing grace, always with us especially in times of need.

How do I know? The Bible tells me so.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Lent

The Feast of Saint Patrick of Ireland

March 17, 2010

I arise today through almighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity, through belief in the Threeness, through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation. . . Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height, Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

The Breastplate of Saint Patrick

Have you ever noticed that an Irish (or a "Celtic") cross is always depicted with intertwining circular knots? When you read this passage from Saint Patrick's morning prayer, which is known as "The Breastplate of Saint Patrick"—you understand why.

Well before Christianity came to Ireland, the Celts believed in the interwoven and intertwined nature of creation. Their ancient music and poetry portrays birds and sky, sea and land, trees and mountains all in a beautiful dynamic relationship, and all in harmony with all humanity.

When Patrick came to Ireland, he built upon the existing world-view of the people of the land. God is a community—a relationship of three that are one, and God is reflected in all the creation.

So, from a "Celtic" perspective, God is a Holy, all-pervasive presence, weaving everything together as One. There is no one or no thing that is without the God in whom we live and move and have our being. Everything is God-filled and so, everything is sacred.

For this reason there are numerous Celtic prayers that are designed to mark every aspect of everyday life. There are prayers for when you rise and sleep, prayers for when you cook a meal or make a pie, or take a bath. There are even prayers for when you sip a glass of wine or raise a glass of ale.

So say a prayer today when you stop at a signal or when you take a shower. Say a prayer if you eat a piece of Irish soda bread. And if you happen to raise a glass, say a prayer. It's the Irish thing to do.

Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 18, 2010

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down to your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf and have worshipped it." Exodus 32:7

The story of the exodus is a timeless story. It's not just a story about Jews on the way to the Promised Land, but it's a story of our Christian journey. It's a story of our human journey.

Throughout this Lenten season we have been hearing about God's desire for our happiness and peace. The Lenten message has been that God desires us more than we could ever desire God. The Lenten message is that, if we are to

find this peace that passes understanding, we must surrender to the Holy Presence and take good care of one another.

Like the people in the wilderness, we also refuse to move toward the Promised Land because we are arrogant and proud, and turn to our own selfish ways. We also build our own golden calves and worship them instead of God. Our golden calf may be our things or our money or our own ambitions, all of which we place above God and others. Each of us knows what our golden calf might look like.

And so, God should rightly be hurt or offended. We have been given the offer of dynamic life, and instead we choose to remain in brittle captivity. But while God has every right to be hurt or offended by our calf-choosing behavior, the exodus story has a different ending. Moses is sent down from the mountain and God allows the people to start over again. That's because God is the lover of our souls not the destroyer.

Do you have any golden caves that you put before or in the place of God? If so, they will always keep you in captivity.

Today God, the lover of our souls, asks you to destroy the golden calf, and start again on your way to the Promised Land.

Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Feast of Saint Joseph

March 19, 2009

O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother, give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands. Collect for the Feast of Saint Joseph

We don't hear a lot about Saint Joseph in the Gospels. We hear plenty about Mary, the mother of Jesus, but very little about Joseph, who the "Collect of the day" calls the "guardian" of Jesus. Guardian, indeed! The truth is that, without Joseph, there would have been no holy birth. Without Joseph, the newborn Jesus would have been killed by Herod's soldiers well before he would have begun the work of building the Kingdom of God.

According to Jewish law, when Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, and he knew he wasn't the father, Joseph had the right to demand that Mary be publicly stoned for adultery. But, instead, he listened to the voice of God

who inspired him to believe that the child to be born was a holy child, destined to change the world. So, he protected Mary and guarded the unborn child and because of this, Jesus was born.

Then, right after the birth, Herod attempted to eliminate someone who might be a rival king. So he sent his soldiers to kill all the newborn babies in Bethlehem. Joseph was again inspired by God to be the guardian of Jesus. He packed up the baby and his mother and led them off into Egypt and out of harm's way.

Because of Joseph and his willingness to listen to the inspiration of the Holy One, the Kingdom of God could be planted forever in the dark and chaos of the world.

As we celebrate this Feast of Saint Joseph on this day of Lent, reflect upon Joseph's role in making the kingdom happen. Are there any places in your life where Herod is trying to eliminate the Kingdom of compassion and love? Is there any way you can guard the Kingdom and keep it from being attacked?

Pray that Joseph will be your guardian and your guide this day!

Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 20, 2010

Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink." John 7:37

If you live in LA, one of the more common sights you see on the street is that of someone holding a plastic bottle of water, taking the occasional sip.

I had a little meditation about the amount of water consumption here. Maybe it's because we live in a desert climate that everyone dries out faster here. Or, maybe people are just thirsty all the time because of something deeper.

Preoccupation with self-gratification leaves a soul feeling parched. When I look around, I see lots of people who only gaze inward. They devote their lives to building up personal fortune, or advancing a career, or achieving a personal agenda. And yet no matter how successful, how much is consumed, or how much self-gratification happens, somehow it just never seems to be enough, that age-old question on the lips, "is that all there is?"

The fact is that it is that we human beings are made to be interdependent. There is something about our DNA that makes us want and need to reach out

to one another. When we are isolated and only look inward, we dry up. When we give back rather than take away we find refreshment. When we foster harmony, we find fulfillment—our thirst gets quenched.

On this day in Lent, Jesus, the living Christ, speaks to thirsty souls. Surrender to the loving power of the ongoing grace of God. Give back, give away, make connections. Drink deeply. But hurry up, Lent is almost over.

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

The Beginning of Passiontide

March 21, 2010

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot said 'why was this perfume not sold and the money given to the poor?' Jesus said: 'leave her alone. She bought it that she might keep it for the day of my burial.' John 12:1-2

We now begin the season of Passiontide. We begin that journey toward Holy Week, and today we turn our attention toward Christ's suffering and death upon the cross.

It won't be long before that sweet fragrance of the perfume will permeate a tomb outside Calvary in which the crucified body of Jesus will be placed.

The story of this pre-preparation for the day of His burial is so bittersweet. We don't want to see His story end. It has been so beautiful. The idea of a final brutal death seems so wrong.

And yet, the cross is inevitable because the cross to which He now heads will be that one conclusive moment when the power of death and violence will come face to face with the power of life and love.

Then, in the tomb, with the sweet fragrance of Mary's perfume permeating the air, we will find out once and for all who wins.

So turn your eyes to the cross. Victory is at the end of this road!

Monday of the Fifth Week in Lent

March 22, 2010

Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Moses commanded us to stone such. He stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." But when

they heard this they all went away. Jesus looked up and said to her, "Where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "no one, Lord." "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." John 8:1-11

When we ask what God is doing for Lent, we hear over and over again that God is looking to find us and to embrace us, not to "get" us.

We all have our sins. We know where we have turned away from God. We know how we have offended others. The reason no one could throw a stone at the adulteress is because no one was without sin. I'd be the first among the non-stone throwers.

And, while Jesus doesn't condemn or stone the sinner, the Gospel ends by Jesus telling the woman to go and sin no more. He doesn't threaten her with condemnation of judgment but he invites her to "sin no more."

It's not so much that sins such as pride and envy, lust and violence give offense to God; rather our sins keep us dead and they enslave us. Over and over we hear God calling us to rise up and be alive. So that's why he tells the woman to sin no more-because he wants her to be alive and free.

On this day in Lent, Jesus tells us that he does not condemn us. But he also tells us to "sin no more." Let us heed his life-giving advice.

Tuesday of the Fifth Week in Lent

March 23, 2010

Then serpents came among them and bit the people so that many of the people of Israel died. . . . So Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." Numbers 21:4-9

Even when they were freed from slavery in Egypt, even when God gave them the law and told them He would guide them to the Promised Land, no matter how hard God tried, the people kept turning away from God and rebelling against one another.

Now, in today's story, out there in the wilderness, they are bitten by poisonous serpents. It seems as if it is all over. God's hopes and dreams that His people would enter the Promised Land and create a new society of justice and compassion seems to have come to an end. The people are all dying off.

So God has to intervene again. God keeps His promises. God won't let His dream for the creation die. So, a fiery serpent, a symbol that God conquers the serpent of death and evil is set upon a pole. People look at it, are saved, and are once again on their way to the Promised Land.

What a beautiful and fitting story for us to consider as we head toward the cross.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, God is calling us, the beloved, into an embrace of life. God has given us direction and guides us on our way to the path of life, but once again we are reminded that we human beings are hard-hearted and arrogant. We turn away from God and rebel against one another and our selfish arrogant ways led us to be bitten by the serpents of death and destruction.

So God has once and for all intervened. Jesus is nailed to the pole. Jesus shows us that God cannot be killed and love will always win the day. If we look upon Him, we shall be saved.

Today we look at Jesus and know that we need a higher power if we are going to make it to the Promised Land. The living Christ is our power. We cannot walk the road toward life alone. God has sent us Jesus, the crucified one nailed to a pole.

On this day in Lent, surrender your power to God's power.

Look upon that Crucified One, and find new life.

Wednesday of the Fifth Week in Lent

The Feast of Oscar Romero and the Martyrs of San Salvador

March 24, 2010

Almighty God, you called our servant Oscar Romero to be a voice for the voiceless poor, and to give his life as a seed of freedom and a sign of hope. Grant that, inspired by his sacrifice and the example of the martyrs of El Salvador, we may without fear or favor witness to your Word who is Life, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Collect for the Feast of Oscar Romero

In 1980, as he stood at the altar, celebrating the Eucharist, Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by government forces in San Salvador. Bishop Romero's crime was that he stood against the powers of empire, which persecuted the poor and threw away the marginalized.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus was accused of that very same crime of standing against an oppressive empire and his fate was also the same, as he was brutally executed on the hard wood of the cross.

The forces of empire and oppression are still very prevalent in today's world. The poor and the marginal have little or no voice in our own culture. The rich and powerful are the rulers of the empire even in our own day. Sick people, immigrants, homeless people, people of color are still sent to the margins of society where they are tolerated at best.

Martin Luther King once said "A person who won't die for something is not fit to live."

What about you? Are you so passionate about the Kingdom of God that you'd be willing to die for it? Are you so passionate, that, when you see injustice or hatred or violence and persecution, you are willing to stand against it, not counting the cost?

I'm probably not so strong that I'd be willing to die for the cause of justice. But I also know I can do more to be passionate about injustice when I see it. I can be a greater advocate for the voiceless ones. I can be their voice.

On this Oscar Romero day, honor the memory of Archbishop Romero by committing yourselves again to the Baptismal promises. Vow again to work for the causes of justice and peace and to respect the dignity of every human being.

Bendito Oscar Romero, ruega por nostostros!

Thursday of the Fifth Week in Lent

The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary

March 25, 2010

"The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary full of grace. Be it done unto me according to thy word. Hail Mary full of grace."
The Angelus

It all seems so sweet and charming on the surface. Meek and mild Mary, dressed in powder blue, eyes cast down as she agrees to be the Mother of Jesus, and is filled with God's Holy Presence. All is calm, all is bright.

But that's not at all how I see this "Annunciation" story. I see a "gutsy" young woman, full of boldness and courage, all dressed in red, her face aglow, eyes

ablaze, taking a bold and wild risk to do God's will, without counting the cost.

Imagine it! You're a young Jewish girl in Nazareth and your whole life has been planned out. You are engaged to be married to the nice boy next door. You will soon have children, go to the temple, sew, cook, do what all other nice girls in Nazareth do.

And then one day you hear the voice of God asking you to do the most outrageous thing: to be the vessel for the Holy Spirit—the womb for the entry of God into the world. And without missing a beat you say "Yes" if that's what God wants, that's what I want. And by doing so, you change the world. Now, that's a powerful story, don't you think?

Mary is the icon of every Christian soul. God is always asking us to be a portal for the Christ to enter the world. Each of us is called to let the Christ become incarnate in our lives as we continue his work of building the Kingdom of God in our own day and in our own times.

Today, this Feast of the Annunciation is a day for us to be bold and take the chance to say "yes" and do the work God has given us to do.

We are at the brink of walking to the cross. When we say "yes" to God there is always a cross in the picture. When you say "yes" to God, you have to be willing to die to selfishness. You have to be willing to make sacrifices and die to your "ego."

On this Feast of the Annunciation, are you willing to embrace the cross by taking the bold step of saying yes to God?

"Be it done unto me according to thy Word."

Friday in the Fifth Week in Lent

March 26, 2010

I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me... there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones and I am weary of holding it in. For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side. Jeremiah 20:7-13

Holy Week begins in a few days. This passage reminds us of the week to come. Terror is mounting on every side, and a cross seems to be inevitable.

But how does all this talk of terror on every side fit in with the very theme of this Lent? Throughout this season over and over, we have heard the voice of God, the lover, calling us back, calling us to rise up and come into the loving embrace. Now, the talk is about terror and a cross.

What we are about to celebrate in Holy Week will remind us once again that you can't rise up and come to God unless you are willing to do some dying. When you surrender yourself into the arms of the lover, you first die to your old self.

If you are so filled with your own selfish ego, it becomes impossible to allow yourself to be embraced by the Holy One. If your life is guided by self-gratification, it becomes impossible to enter into life-giving harmonious relationships with others. So, you have to do some dying to "rise up." You have to die to the ego. You have to lose your old "self" in order to find your true self.

Dying to selfishness and ego is tough-it evokes terror, and a cross is always on the path to an empty tomb.

On these last few days before holy Week, what needs to die so that you might rise up?

Saturday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 27, 2009

My lover spoke to me and said, "rise up my love, my beautiful one, and come with me. See! The winter is past, the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

The fig tree forms its early fruit; The blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Rise up my love, my beautiful one, and come with me." The Song of Solomon 2:10-13

And so the time has come. It is time to die to the old so that the new may begin.

The rains are over, flowers appear, it's time to rise up.

