



Maryknoll Office
for Global Concerns

Lenten

REFLECTION GUIDE

JUBILEE OF HOPE

2025

“

May the power of hope fill our days, as we await with confidence the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever.

”

POPE FRANCIS

About this resource

In this Lenten Reflection Guide, we offer reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Scripture readings in light of Catholic social teaching and Maryknoll mission experience. Use this guide individually or in small groups to reflect upon your life patterns, to pray more deeply, and to renew your spirit to face the realities of our world.

Quotes from Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and Maryknoll Sisters from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns online Scripture Reflection series. Maryknoll Lay Missioner quote from the website, www.mklm.org.

Photos

Cover image: Photo of steps leading up to the church of Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala by Thomas Gould.

Ash Wednesday: Photo of the Porta Sancta, which was opened for the 2025 Jubilee year, courtesy of the Dicastery for Evangelization, via Flickr. Photo of men from Khartoum, Sudan, by Ammar Hreib via Pixabay.

First Sunday of Lent: Photo of Sr. Kathleen Reiley, MM, in Fukushima, Japan by Sean Sprague, courtesy of the Maryknoll Magazine. Photo of Sr. Susan Nchubiri, MM, speaking at Ash Wednesday service in front of the White House, February 14, 2024, by Thomas Gould.

Second Sunday of Lent: Photo of children playing in the outskirts of Katha, Myanmar, by Axel Drainville via Flickr. Photo of Peter Altman in Zaragoza, La Libertad, El Salvador, courtesy of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.

Third Sunday of Lent: Photo of fig on by Jametlene Reskp via Unsplash. Photo of wheat stalks by Divesh Ray via PxHere.

Fourth Sunday of Lent: Photo of child holding father's hand by Julien Harneis via Flickr. Photo of an elderly woman's shoes and walking stick, Nepal, courtesy of Sr. Janet Hockman, MM.

Fifth Sunday of Lent: Photo of Marie Dennis outside the World Bank, Washington, DC, for the 2000 Jubilee Year Good Friday Way of the Cross services by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Photo of Kathy Bond courtesy of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.

Palm Sunday: Photos of Steve Barrett in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, and Rosa Beatriz De Larios in Guatemala City, Guatemala by Thomas Gould.

This guide was typeset in EB Garamond 11/13 and Open Sans 10/13.

About us

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missionaries, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missionaries serve.

Washington Office
200 New York Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001
+1 (202) 832-1780

New York Office
P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
+1 (914) 941-7575

 facebook.com/MaryknollOfficeforGlobalConcerns
 instagram.com/maryknollogc/

ogc@maryknoll.org
www.maryknollogc.org



Ash Wednesday

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart.

JOEL 21:28

Today's readings call the community of believers to pious communal actions demonstrating penitence and prayer for God's deliverance. The admonitions against hypocrisy indicate that it is not the actions that are criticized but the underlying motivation for doing them.

Almsgiving, prayer and fasting were traditional religious actions of pious Jews and these are commended. However, in an honor society the goal of these actions could be corrupted to seeking status and honor, by the public show of the actor.

The final verses of Chapter Six of Matthew say that the true purpose of such actions is to strive first for God's reign in the world, and for God's justice to guide human affairs.

These verses list three basic needs that all people have, for food, drink and clothing. But Jesus teaches: "Set your hearts on God's kingdom first and on his justice and all these other things will be given you as well." The verb used is "striving," which demonstrates that it is not a passive attitude required but an active doing. They emanate from the heart's orientation to strive to return structures and practices to their God-given role in care for the earth and promotion of what today we call the common good.

In this Holy Year one communal action we are all called to participate in is restoration of the ecological balance of the planet, which has been rendered askew by the industrial practices of the last two centuries. To a certain extent these practices have resulted in tremendous material progress, not only in the developed countries but even in formerly very poor countries. Poverty and hunger have been greatly reduced, millions of children are being educated, maternal and infant mortality have seen huge improvements, and international norms, policies and structures exist to try to prevent war—although these are not always followed. However, this progress has a serious shadow side, such as the threat of run-away global warming and climate change,

as well as the harmful effects of the extraction of essential metals and the labor to do the extraction. Restoration and restitution are needed.

The areas of the world most impacted by climate change, referred to as the two-thirds world (derived from its previous designation as "third world"), are those countries located primarily in the southern hemisphere that are the least responsible for climate change but suffering the worst consequences. The United Nations refers to the rectification of this injustice as Loss and Damage, but we can also call it restitution for previous offenses, whether intentional or unintentional.

Pope Francis has linked restoration of the planet to debt forgiveness during this Jubilee Year, by stating:

"The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation. A jubilee for our mother Earth, disfigured by profiteering; a time of jubilee for the poorer countries burdened beneath unfair debts."

Pope Francis has frequently argued that such debt relief is a matter of justice, linking it to the "ecological debt" wealthy nations owe to poorer, less polluting countries.

We as individuals can participate in this global action by examining what we wear, what we eat, and how much fossil fuel energy we use. Do we buy too many inexpensive clothes that contribute to depletion of natural resources and exploitation of cheap labor? Do we eat inordinate amounts of beef and other meat items that contribute to global warming and other environmental problems? And are we able to perform a fossil fuel fast, by radically reducing the amount of gasoline we use in traveling from one place to another?

Jesus, echoing Amos, said that this is the fast that I want: "to let justice flow like the water and integrity like an unfailing stream."✠ *- by Father Frank Breen, MM*

Questions for Reflection

What are some ways setting your heart on God's kingdom can bring about justice for others and for creation?

What can you do in your own life this season as an act of reconciliation with our mother Earth?



Readings

Jl 2:12-18 | 2 Cor 5:20—6:2 | Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Prayer

God in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both humanity
and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.
Amen.

- Pope Francis

Response

Watch the 3-minute video “Debt Relief for Climate Vulnerable Countries explained” to learn what practical steps can be taken during the Jubilee year to free countries from the burden of unjust and unsustainable debt.
<https://mogc.info/DRCVC>

One day in the predominately Muslim city of Khartoum in Sudan, I got lost while walking around, and I found the courage to ask a policeman for directions. He kindly pointed the way for me. I boarded a crowded bus and several young men stood up just to offer me a seat. It struck me that most people are people just trying to get by, day by day, working to put food on the table, to take care of their loved ones, and live in harmony with neighbors.

In our hearts, whatever the religion, whatever the national allegiance or political stance, we know that the Lord is full of mercy and grace. And it is our vocation, as followers of Jesus, to look upon others as God looks upon them. The Gospel of Luke states it very clearly: “Give to everyone who asks of you...Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

- Father Mike Snyder
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

Fast

Fast from ruminating on disappointments. Foster a spirit of gratitude by purposely recognizing the beauty and gifts around you and in this world.

Let go of your prisoners today: Forgive people you imprison to their pasts.



First Sunday

No one who believes in him will be put to shame.
ROMANS 10:11

The devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to Jesus, “I shall give you all this power and the glory... All this will be yours, if you worship me.”

But Jesus answered, “You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.”

The God that we worship as followers of Jesus is the one who “heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression” as mentioned in the first reading of today’s liturgy. These days, we do not often hear or see much of the misery of the world. On the front pages of most newspapers, we more often read about people who want to gain glory, wealth, and power.

Maybe if we turn to page four or five, at the bottom in a small corner, we might see coverage of the working conditions for those who labor—including many small children—in developing countries extracting the rare metals modern society craves for our high-tech gadgets.

These metals are extremely expensive when we try to buy them, but who profits? Certainly not the laborers in developing countries. And this inequity is only the latest episode in a centuries-old story of colonization. So many countries in our world had their land, culture, and resources taken from them with little to no compensation.

Today, economic colonization flourishes outside of the limelight. What would happen if the wealthy countries in our world paid but a slightly more just share of the wealth they have extracted in exchange for the resources and labor that produced the wealth we enjoy?

As Christians, we are challenged to reflect deeply and open our hearts to “hear the cries of the poor” as our loving God does. That is the theological justification behind debt

relief in a jubilee year. As explained in Deuteronomy:

“If your neighbor is poor and gives you his cloak as security for a loan, do not keep the cloak overnight. Return their cloak by sunset so that your neighbor may sleep in it. Then they will thank you and it will be regarded as a Righteous act in the sight of the Lord your God.”

Reading the newspaper is part of my prayer life. I read recently that the UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima urged African leaders to respond to the uncertainty in foreign aid funding by increasing domestic spending to fight AIDS. But she noted that many African nations were saddled with huge debts, which crippled their ability to cover the shortfall needed. “Without funding for the HIV response, we risk losing all we have gained... And if we want national governments to plug the gap, we must give them the means to do so.”

As far as I understand the system, the borrowers have paid back the sum of their initial loan—but it is the interest rate that keeps growing endlessly. Can we not create a better system for the whole human family to live in harmony and peace, sharing the gifts of our earth equally?

Perhaps I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one...

And when my turn comes to stand in judgement before God, I hope to be among the crowd that asks our Lord, “When did I see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did I see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did I see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

To which the Lord will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”✠

- by Sister Kathleen Reiley, MM

Questions for Reflection

Does your bank or your government profit from loaning money to people who must borrow to survive, but will suffer more in order to pay it back?

How does the virtue of forgiveness extend to systemic and economic relationships?

Readings

Dt 26:4-10 | Rom 10:8-13 | Lk 4:1-13

Prayer

Lord of all good things,
You have made us a blessed nation,
A city set on a mountain,
And have willed us to do for the least of yours
What we would do for you.
Make us a generous people:
Sharers with the hungry,
Comforters of the sick,
Protectors of the most vulnerable,
Friends of the alien,
People of shelter in the time of storm,
Advocates for the oppressed,
Speaking out whenever and wherever your people are
threatened.

Teach us to share graciously, as you shared all for us,
To tithe righteously, setting aside a just portion for our
poorest brothers and sisters,
To give joyfully, knowing that we are pleasing the God
who desires mercy over sacrifice,
As individuals, as families,
As a nation.

Then will all know of your justice, of your glory.
For a city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Amen.

- Prayer by Edward Hoyt courtesy of Catholic Relief Services

Response

Take time this week to learn about Kenya, where a foreign debt crisis has made unemployment, poverty and inequality worse as the government must make loan repayments before investing in education, health care, and social services. Watch a 5 minute video about HIV Ministry in Kenya with Maryknoll Fr. Rick Bauer. <https://mogc.info/LRG-Kenya>



In his message on the World Day of Prayer for Care Creation, Pope Francis reminds us that “the life of a Christian is one of faith, active in charity and abounding in hope, as we await the Lord’s return in glory.” Therefore, we can not afford to despair or be hopeless because God works in us and through us. Active faith calls us to love and be in solidarity with all who suffer injustice and violence, whether physical, structural, systemic or ideological. It invites us to treat every human being with dignity, respect, and honor regardless of their status, race, gender, political affiliation, religion, or geographical location. I invite us to reflect on the question: How can I be in solidarity with those suffering injustice and violence?

- Sister Susan Nchubiri
Maryknoll Sisters

Fast

Adopt water-only days. Choose specific days to only drink water, reflecting on your relationship with water, a sacred and essential part of life to be shared by the Beloved Community. World Water Day is March 22.



Second Sunday

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart.
JOEL 21:28

In Myanmar, it is difficult for people to count on a steady income, land, even food or education. When their families, clan or communities cannot meet their basic needs, they rely on their faith in God and their deeply ingrained religious rituals (some involving animal sacrifice) that come from the Buddhist and Christian traditions that surround them.

One thing that is true is that faith is essential for the people's sanity and survival.

God's promise to the people through Abraham about 16 centuries before the birth of Christ was clear. Abraham would have many descendants and inherit land. But with this promise came God's covenant—as humans we must follow God's way. But how do we know God's way in our confusing world filled with situations of poverty, violence, war, greed?

On this second Sunday of Lent, Psalm 27 reminds us: "the Lord is my light and my salvation." And Paul's message from prison reminds the new Christians of the first century that we must "stand firm in the Lord in this way..." And that way involves following Christ, whose "way" led to his crucifixion.

Having lived among us, Jesus knows that we humans need reassurances at times, and James and John are encouraged and enthusiastic when they witness the vision of Jesus in full radiance with Moses and Elijah.

As the gospel of Luke unfolds, however, James and John awake to the fact that to really live the life of Jesus in our culture and world will surely bring suffering – as it did for Jesus.

If we try to live "as Jesus did" we discover God's Spirit in our everyday lives in many ways. I was part of a group that started a small support program in a parish for people

living with HIV and AIDS in Myanmar. Ten people came by special invitation and were very wary when they met each other. Some had known each other in their parish, but didn't know they were HIV positive.

The group struggled to accept each other and themselves, and they learned to be more open with each other. They learned about each other's experiences with HIV and AIDS, their feelings about being rejected and ostracized, and not being able to support themselves, get medicines or even basic food. In the meantime they also had the opportunity to learn more about HIV and AIDS, and meet other organized groups.

At Christmas time, this group (who named themselves "Guiding Star") visited our house to sing Christmas carols for us. The group grew to about 30 people, young and old, men and women; they openly displayed their red AIDS ribbons and became strong in their resolve to educate others and to support one another. They were so alive – with obvious new life.

Yes, each of them had suffered and continued to suffer. But they had discovered a meaning for their lives and were learning to help each other. Their faith traditions included Catholic, Baptist, Buddhist, Muslim, and animist. Among them were Burmese and other various ethnic groups. They achieved a unity that the rest of the country still works toward. They all bonded over their painful experiences facilitated by compassion and friendship which opened them to new life.

Jesus is transfigured among all of us in many ways. Day by day as we try to live for others as Jesus did, we understand a bit more fully the meaning of Jesus's life, death and resurrection.‡

- by Sister Mary Grenough, MM (1933-2021)

Questions for Reflection

Can you think of a time when taking a risk, overcoming fear, or doing something uncomfortable led to a positive transformation in your life?

Where do you feel fear and trepidation about addressing a human need or social injustice today, and how might you overcome it?

Readings

Gn 15:5-12, 17-18 | Phil 3:17—4:1 | Lk 9:28b-36

Prayer

A Prayer for Living Fratelli Tutti

When our lofty words of love have been emptied of their meaning,

When our borders and computer screens have erected impenetrable walls,

When our minds are so quick to conflate “other” with “enemy,”

How will we find our common humanity?

It’s never too late to make an earnest and tender start.

May we remove from our pockets the stones we intended to throw

And cement them together to build a home that welcomes all.

May we repent of our indifference and move into genuine encounter.

Instead of drawing battle lines,

May we draw our chairs up to a communal table,

Where we can feast in the knowledge of our shared dignity.

May God grant us the holy vision

To see every human being a sacred mystery,

And may we love each mystery not abstractly, but concretely.

Just as Thomas touched the wounds of Jesus,

May we be unafraid to touch the wounds of our suffering neighbor.

May we lay down our arms and offer our outstretched hands,
Until there is no “them,” but only “us,”

- Cameron Bellm

Response

Take time this week to learn about El Salvador, where the government’s high foreign debt weakens its ability to invest in its people and respond to economic shocks. Read about Maryknoll Lay Missioners’ Soy Nutrition Program <https://mogc.info/mklmSoy>



No matter how different our ministries might look from the outside, they all share the approach described by the late civil rights leader Congressman John Lewis: a genuine sharing of life marked by deep listening. At a glance, our ministries might sometimes look similar to the work being done by the many NGOs in El Salvador, but what distinguishes our work is that it is built upon authentic relationships and a real presence in local communities.

- Peter Altman
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Fast

Adopt Meatless Fridays (or more). Commit to eating a vegetarian diet for a set number of days per week and to raise awareness about the environmental impact of meat production, contributing a large portion of greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more by reading “This ancient tradition could be a key climate action for US Catholics,” in the National Catholic Reporter. <https://mogc.info/NCR-fast>



Third Sunday

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart.
JOEL 21:28

There are two terrible tragedies: the Romans kill Galileans at a religious festival on the Temple grounds, and then a tower wall collapses crushing 18 people to death in Siloam. Miles away from Jerusalem, however, the crowd with Jesus feels safe from such disasters.

Nevertheless, Jesus warns the people of the arduous death awaiting them, if they die without God. Many of them have excluded the poor, been blind to the suffering of others, and are lost in a self-centered quest for illusory happiness devoid of inner peace.

Real peace flows from the unconditional love of Christ for the poor, marginalized and sinners. Despite our rationalizations to the contrary, we are all sinners in need of Christ's peace.

Our faith in Jesus calls us to a new way of being. A new mindset, a transformed way of thinking, speaking and acting toward others. By quieting the anxious thoughts of our inner voice, we move beyond ourselves to more meaningful connections with humanity and creation. We can move past socio-psychological barriers to encounter the fringe, the others living among us, like the homeless, abandoned single mothers, impoverished families, immigrants and unwanted elderly.

Christians make the love of God radiate outward to the forgotten, neglected and unloved in our communities. Like the burning sign of God's presence to Moses in the desert, the compassion of Christ changes lives. Not only by upholding the dignity of others, but for us who intentionally reach out to those in need.

Ignite the love within yourself to minister to others this Lent. Believe your intuition. Through compassionate service to those who are poor and isolated, you can resonate the loving Spirit of Christ, the grace of God that gives life to the desolate.

In the gospel reading, Jesus tells the parable of a barren fig tree. The fig tree represents the Jerusalem Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. On a larger scale, this parable symbolizes the spiritual barrenness of our fallen humanity. Like our overwhelmingly anxious lives, this tree no longer bears

fruit. Jesus, the gardener, however, asks God, the owner of the orchard, for additional time to cultivate life-giving figs from the parched tree. Jesus will provide essential nutrients to the tree's roots. The living water of Christ revives the tree of life.

This parable calls us to reflect on our lives. We have the chance to change this Lent. Even if Christ feels distant and our spiritual lives appear dry. We might ask where is God in the daily struggles of our lives?

We can look to Christ, who calls us to a mature purpose-driven life. The Spirit of Christ offers fullness of life and the ultimate grace to die with dignity. Redemption from our old self transforms us. By faith, we gradually walk the path to salvation. Fidelity to God and neighbor, with compassion for the struggling poor, reveals Christ in the world.

Jesus rescues us from the spiritual void of our post-human age. Although churches are fading into diocesan mergers, the spirit of renewal in Christ is undying. Spiritual peace prevails over insatiable desires, preventing the spiral into compulsive sins. When our true self is reborn in Christ, the will of God becomes our will, fortifies our innate goodness. By faith, Christ overcomes self-destructive behaviors and habits.

Humility acknowledges the transformative power of the Spirit. Egotistical hubris, however, disregards history, natural law and commonsense belief in something greater than ourselves. The proud propose a theory of everything that leaves no room for the spirituality that completes human existence. Moreover, the inherent limitations of human cognition and perception prevent us from encompassing all things, including God.

Lent is our time to grow spiritually. The grace of God is calling us. The Spirit of Christ is reaching out to us. Receive God's love by healing others spiritually, emotionally and with basic needs. Accompany the poor, as Jesus did. Through Christ we help tend to the tree of life.

Blessings on your Lenten journey this year.✠

- by Father Greg McPhee, MM

Questions for Reflection

As you pray, reflecting on the needs of the poor, sick, or lonely, the immigrant or the abandoned, how might God nurture and strengthen you to bear fruit to share?

What is one thing you can do in your own life this season, with God's help, to tend to the tree of life?

Readings

Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15 | 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12 | Lk 13:1-9

Prayer

A Four-fold Benedictine Blessing

May God bless you with a restless discomfort about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

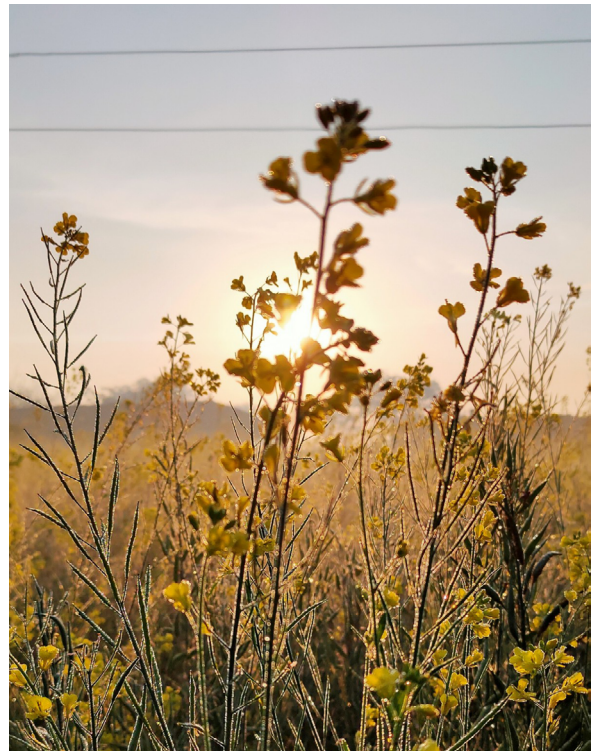
May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

And the blessing of God the Supreme Majesty and our Creator, Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who is our brother and Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide, be with you and remain with you, this day and forevermore. AMEN.

- by Sister Ruth Marlene Fox, OSB

Response

Sign Pope Francis's global petition to world leaders to "turn debt into hope" for countries burdened by crippling debt in the Global South. <https://mogc.info/DebtintoHope>



We face enormous challenges of injustice in our society: discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, economic inequality, and ecological destruction, divisions stoked by fear, hatred, and lust for power. Understandably, we can feel powerless to make major changes. But drawing strength from our faith in God's continual love-energy at work in our world, as subtle yet effective as how a mustard seed grows and yeast expands, we can take small steps to act wherever we are. We can act with what resources we have, and with whom we are near, to enhance, support, and encourage sprouts of God's rule of justice, solidarity, and community.

- Father Ken Thesing
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

Fast

Fast from technology. Turn off your cell phone, computer, television. Use that time to care for your relationship with God, the earth, yourself, and others. Go for a walk, explore nature, seek out conversation with neighbors, especially those who are lonely.



Fourth Sunday

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart.

JOEL 21:28

The Parable of the Prodigal Son, this Sunday's gospel reading, is a story so familiar that it is easy to feel immune to both the breadth and depth of its message. It is the story of three people, a father and his two sons, and the actions and reactions of each of them in an important moment.

The youngest son is the "prodigal" son. This son takes his inheritance and goes off to "foreign lands" and squanders it all on excesses with selfish abandon. The heart of the story comes when the son – now broke, alone, suffering, and ashamed – returns home to beg for his father's forgiveness, while acknowledging his unworthiness to receive such forgiveness.

In an extraordinary action, the father sees his son from afar and runs out to meet him. The son doesn't have a chance to confess and beg forgiveness before the father embraces him with great joy and emotion.

The third person in the parable is the older son, who has worked faithfully throughout his life and returns at the end of the day to find his father receiving his wayward brother not just as an equal son, but almost as royalty. The father has "killed the fatted calf" to celebrate. The older brother is full of anger and jealousy, complaining vehemently that their father never so much as killed a goat for him.

Time spent as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in different cultures has helped me to see that we have much to learn from people who live a cultural tradition, a theology, a view of reality that is different than our own.

Sometimes I wonder if our U.S. culture is "prodigal." When will we see our country's excesses compared to most of the rest of the world? When will we finally feel the "pinch" and see that we are squandering what has so generously been given to us?

When will we recognize that we are overconsuming natural resources while younger generations and other parts of the world beg us to stop? When will we realize the effects our way of life on the rest of the world? How will we acknowledge what we have done and ask for forgiveness?

When will our eyes open to that part of us that is the older son, who has received so much, thanks to a generous and loving parent? The Father invites us to share in the joy of knowing that those who are in need are welcome to the fullness of life unconditionally.

The gospel story shouts of reconciliation. The father desires for his family to be reconciled. Rather than dwell on wrongdoings, he helps each brother understand that they are loved equally in his eyes and worthy of all he has.

Our country is deeply and bitterly divided. Having served in East Africa for many years as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner, I find hope in the incredible acts of forgiveness as well as "embrace of the other" that I witnessed there. I remember the powerful, nonviolent attempts at "Truth and Reconciliation" by South Africans, regardless of race and atrocities perpetrated against them. I remember the Rwandan Genocide, which occurred while I was serving in nearby Sudan, and the remarkable stories of Rwandese of both ethnic tribes who chose the path of reconciliation when dealing with the horrendous acts done against them.

Although some would dispute the effectiveness of the Truth and Reconciliation methods, the profound truth embedded in these gestures continues to teach us.

The father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is alive and well in our brothers and sisters of all races, genders, nationalities, and sexual orientation who, day to day, teach us how to forgive and reconcile. As important as personal forgiveness is, our society cries out for a larger embrace.✠

- by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Marj Humphrey

Questions for Reflection

Is there a person or group you find difficult to forgive, or struggle with feeling does not “deserve” to be forgiven?

How might your forgiveness of those people lead to a path of truth and reconciliation?

Readings

Jos 5:9a, 10-12 | 2 Cor 5:17-21 | Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

Prayer

Lord, give me courage to keep lighting candles, even though I know some will burn out and some will blow out.

Heal me, Lord, when I get burned while trying to keep the light going.

Teach me to give generously and wisely, Lord, even when I don't have enough candles for everyone.

Give me strength, Lord, when despair and discouragement tempt me to accept the darkness.

Lord, forgive me when I preach candles to those who can't even afford matches.

Grant me humility, Lord, when everyone else seems to have spotlights and floodlights and all I have is a lousy candle.

Teach me patience, Lord, when it is a long time between candles.

Help me to forgive, Lord, when someone I try to help deceives me, cheats me, or steals my candle.

But most of all, forgive me Lord and grant me faith and hope when I start to believe the world is too dark, too cold, and too windy for simple candles.

- Dan Griffin, returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner

Response

Commit to learning about ways to take action on one of the three issues raised by Pope Francis for the Jubilee year:

- Abolish the death penalty with the Catholic Mobilizing Network <https://catholicismobilizing.org/>
- Forgive unjust global debts with Jubilee USA <https://www.jubileeusa.org/>,
- Reallocate arms spending to build peace with Pax Christi USA <https://paxchristiusa.org/>



Think of those who move about with walking sticks, crutches, tapping sticks, canes, and the arm of another. Perhaps you use one yourself? What witness is offered to healing of trauma, hope in migrant journeys, the courage to engage diseases, as a reminder that exploration and perceptions are not limited to eyesight alone, to slow down, be attentive, balance and take risks. What helps any of us move into new territory with trust and that we are continually summoned and sent by God? I often think that God asks complicated and hard things of us to be a witness and prophet and disciple. A walking stick seems too simple yet may well be the wisdom of God to encourage the next steps of faith.

- Sister Janet Hockman
Maryknoll Sisters

Fast

Challenge privilege. Use the Privilege Walk exercise to identify and reflect on your own privileges and the injustices in your community and everyday life. <https://mogc.info/priviledgewalk>

Fast from allowing the fear of scarcity to guide your decisions, big or small. Take stock of the blessings in your life and contemplate ways you can share them.



Fifth Sunday

And Jesus wept.
JOHN 11:35

Like Jesus, we are weeping ... in the Holy Land, in Ukraine, in Sudan, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Myanmar, in the United States, in schools, homes and public spaces around the world. But this week, even as we prepare to retell the story of his Passion and Death, we hear Jesus say: I am the resurrection and the life ...

A few years ago, Christians across the United States spent months reflecting on the signs of the times in their local communities, across the country and around the world to discern what should be the response of Christians to the brokenness and injustice that they saw. In the tradition of the *kairos* documents from South Africa, Central America, Palestine and several other countries, their message was powerful, challenging and hopeful. It was about Jubilee – and, in ways it carries a critical message for these times of crisis.

We are led by the Spirit to a new relationship with the earth and all its creatures based on a deep sense of kinship – to reject the obsessive patterns of consumption which drive the disintegration of creation.

We are led by the Spirit to shape a culture of radical nonviolence – a living alternative to the reality of our times, consciously countering racism, sexism, heterosexism, domestic violence, street violence, state violence, militarism.

...We are led by the Spirit to relinquish and renounce economic privilege ... We are led by the Spirit to restructure radically the global economy ... to benefit the excluded poor and the rest of creation – to lift the burden of debt from the backs of the poor.

We take the spirit of Jubilee to be a preeminent sign of this *kairos* time.

We are frightened by the signs of crisis ...encouraged by the

signs of hope ...compelled by the urgency of both.

Thus, we commit ourselves to the works of repentance – to reparation, redress, re-valuing.

We commit ourselves to enact the Jubilee concretely in our communities, our institutions, our lives.

The Jubilee is calling for nothing less than a paradigm shift to a world where right relationships between humans and the earth shape domestic affairs, international relations, and the global economy, fueling a transformation of pervasive direct and structural violence into a more just and peaceful world. It is a massive and demanding shift, but urgently needed. And well-organized action is the only way to accomplish the deep transformation Jubilee promotes.

Pope Francis, quoting Bishop and former president of Pax Christi Italy, Tonino Bello, reminds us that “We cannot be content to hope; we have to organize hope..

The possibility of transformational change—including debt cancellation, an end to the death penalty, spending on human and environmental needs rather than armaments—is a claim on hope.

The challenge is to see signs of the Reign of God – of Resurrection - inbreaking now, to recognize them, to hang onto them in spite of the questions that shake our confidence to the core. Jubilee defines changes that we must make to our way of organizing the world in order that the Reign of God can break in. Right relationships among human beings and with the rest of creation ... reorder the economy of life – cancel debts, release slaves (debtors), restore the land (debtors’) – Jubilee.

“I am the resurrection and the life...” ✠

- by Marie Dennis, Maryknoll Affiliate

Questions for Reflection

As you think about organizing hope not only in our own lives but in our communities, institutions, and wider world, what is one injustice you feel called to heal?

What actions will you take in this Jubilee Year to connect with others in overcoming social sin, institutional violence, and injustice?

Readings

Is 43:16-21 | Phil 3:8-14 | Jn 8:1-11

Prayer

Beloved God,

This little moment we would spend with Thee in gratitude for a lifetime of little moments.

I would thank Thee for Thy Spirit breathing in me, directing me Stained Glassto follow the flow of Freedom.

I would thank Thee for Thy Promise, fulfilled in me, assuring me of Thine abiding Presence.

I would thank Thee for Thy faithfulness strengthening me, upholding me in Compassion's trustworthy arms,

I would thank Thee for Thy Providence sheltering me, reminding me of Thine eternal Abundance made available to me.

I would thank Thee for Thy Life, extended in me, extended in all Thy children, each Thine own original creation. Amen

- Maryknoll Sister Joan Metzner

Response

Share our "Turn Debt into Hope" campaign flyer with your faith community to learn about Pope Francis's debt relief campaign for the Jubilee year 2025 and ways you can be part of join the campaign. <https://mogc.info/JubileeExplained>



Celina, a prisoner with whom I work in São Paulo, Brazil, said, 'Sometimes I feel like the guards are in prison and I am free. I see them on their 12-hour shifts sitting in cold, dark spaces with so much anger that they try to take it out on us. I never let their negativity bring me down.'

A native of Cape Verde, Celina is a teacher who is serving a five-year sentence for carrying drugs into Brazil. While in jail, she volunteers by co-facilitating a support group with me for new arrivals. Her reflections reminded me of the Robert Lentz icon titled "Christ in the Margins" (see photo above), which challenges us to reflect on the ways we all are imprisoned.

- Kathy Bond
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Fast

Do a social media detox. Take a break from futile distractions like social media for a day, a week, or longer and use the time saved to quiet your mind and be open to the Spirit.



Palm Sunday

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart.

JOEL 21:28

The setting: Jesus riding in to Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowds loudly shouting their hosannas.

It is a time of rejoicing but at the same time, those of us who know the story realize that Jesus is on the way to his eventual execution.

The Pharisees, scandalized by the scene that Jesus' disciples are creating, urge him to stifle their exuberance. In many passages we see the Pharisees wanting to silence Jesus and eventually to silence him permanently as they plotted his death with the religious and political authorities. In the popular sanitized Sunday School version of this account, the fact that Jesus is going to meet his death is downplayed or outright passed over.

Why are the Pharisees so eager to have Jesus silence the crowds?

It may at first appear that they just want the ruffraff to calm, but we know there is much more to it. Jesus exposed the reality of his times, a reality that sadly prevails twenty centuries later: a world in which the rich and powerful live at the expense of the poor and defenseless. Jesus exposed the idolatry of the religious and political authorities of his day.

Monseñor Oscar Romero identified those idols specifically as wealth and the altar of national security. Like Jesus, Romero was killed for not only naming reality but also, in the words of the Spanish-Salvadoran theologian Ignacio Ellacuría, for bearing the burden of the reality of the people.

Like Jesus, Romero bore the burden of the reality of his people by walking with them, accompanying them in their darkest moments and by being their voice. And,

like Jesus and Romero, Ellacuría would also join the list of martyrs who stood up for the truth.

What can move the stones to cry out in our current world context?

In a list that seems endless, we would have to include: human trafficking; the oppression against migrants; the silencing of women; the relentless plundering of the earth for its natural resources and the violent expulsion of people from their land so that corporations may have access to the land's natural riches; child laborers harvesting minerals, working in life-threatening conditions so that we may have our computers and cell phones; corrupt governments that deny people basic services and that prevent nations from fully developing their potential....

Something else that hasn't changed since Jesus' times are the victims of the world's injustices—those being overwhelmingly the poor people of this world. This is due to what has often been referred to as structural sin that is the result of the inequitable distribution of wealth and economic policies that keep marginalizing the poor and that drive more people into poverty. Our martyred sister Jean Donovan referred to this as the social sin of the First World.

Are we willing to walk with Jesus during this Lenten season and to bear the burden of the reality of his people?

Can we say with the prophet Isaiah that God has shown us “how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them” and that God “opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back?”✠

- by returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner Steve Barrett

Questions for Reflection

Where in your life do you find authentic exuberance? Do you feel free to express it? What holds you back?

Readings

Lk 19:28-40 | Is 50:4-7 | Phil 2:6-11 | Lk 22:14, 23:56

Prayer

Lord, make me a witness to your truth.
Turn my eyes from evil.
Close my ears to falsehood.
Shield my mind from the temptation
To judge others who sin differently than I.
Seal my lips from adding to the noise
Of a world that worships power,
Rewards greed and sacrifices humanity
On the high altar of fame and success.
O Divine Master, grant that my heart
May beat stronger for love of you
In the poor, abandoned and downtrodden
Of the Earth, who cry out to Heaven
For justice tempered with mercy,
Love rooted in reality, and the light of
Faith that dares shine in the darkness.
With your Gospel as my guide, lead me
Along the ways of joy and righteousness.
Give me courage to stand on the side of
All who suffer injustice or violence,
To stand up for those whose dignity is
Damaged by indifference and
Whose worth is denied by forces of power.
As I forgive others may I find forgiveness.
As I die to myself may I rise to new life
In that kingdom where you live and reign
With all the saints, known and unknown,
Now and forever. Amen.

- *Maryknoll Father Joseph R. Veneroso*

Response

Take action to restore U.S. foreign assistance. The new Administration has issued terminations on almost all foreign aid programs. Let your members of Congress and the Administration know that you are deeply concerned about the impacts on the impoverished and vulnerable around the world. <https://mogc.info/USaidadvocacy>



It should be clarified that disasters are not natural, as most people say, they are considered the result of a problem resulting from a deficient and unjust model of human development; affecting the most vulnerable people. Guatemala has suffered in recent years the impact of excessive rainfall, drought, forest fires, events that have resulted in loss of ecosystems, reduction of the quality and availability of water resources, deaths, respiratory and intestinal diseases, food insecurity and lack of water supply, coupled with heat waves more than usual and lasting in different regions of the country, causing heat exhaustion. Climate change affects us all, especially women, indigenous peoples and populations in marginal urban and rural areas, because they are the most vulnerable groups.

- Rosa Beatriz De Larios
Maryknoll Affiliate in Guatemala

Fast

Fast from unnecessary shopping. Dedicate Lent to consciously reducing purchases from fast fashion brands and instead focus on thrifting or repairing clothes you already own. Abstain for at least one whole day from unnecessary consumption and use the time or money saved to offer love and compassion to someone in need.