



2018  
Lenten Reflections



CATHOLIC MOBILIZING NETWORK

# Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Joel 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 12-13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18



by Dale S. Recinella, JD, MTS



Modern pop-wisdom insists upon choosing between mercy for the so-called worthy and unmitigated punishment for the others. Our faith heritage scoffs at such self-condemning moral ignorance; and instead reminds us that before God all are unworthy, even those who are esteemed by the world.

Our cultural misperception of reality is not new. 2400 years ago, the prophet Joel was facing this problem. The people of Judah had lapsed into a self-indulgent, me-first society. Then, suddenly they were besieged by a plague of locusts that threatened to destroy every living thing in Judah. Mass starvation was imminent.

Joel responds by calling the people of Judah to get back on track with God's program, warning that their insolence and self-righteousness before God has brought this judgment upon them (JL 2:12-18). He calls their plight the Day of the Lord. This message of doom is tempered with the promise of God's mercy, but only if the people repent and soften their hearts to the will of God, who is quick to forgive and shower mercy upon God's people.

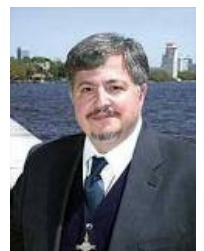
Our reading tells us that God did not scream, "Three strikes and you're out!" God did not dismiss their repentance as "crocodile tears." God did not disdain their lamentations as "only trying to save their own skin." Fortunately, God did not respond like many of us would to a habitual offender today. Instead, God took pity on the people of Judah. The Day of the Lord was itself transformed from an event of apocalyptic horror to a hallmark of God's merciful and saving grace for those who repent and reform.

It is also fortunate for David that God does not act like we do. The Responsorial Psalm reminds us that David had committed at least two offenses subject to capital punishment under Hebrew law: adultery and murder. Yet, when David begs for mercy, God does not respond "eye for an eye!" God does not scream "Take your punishment like a man!" No. God's response is consistent with the handling of the murderer Moses and the murderer Saul (Paul). God forgives and restores the repentant David.

In our reading from the Epistles, the reformed murderer Paul makes it explicitly clear that we are to be ambassadors, not of revenge, but of Christ's gift of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:20). And we are to do so now, today, for "now is the Day of the Lord."

Finally, our Gospel reading is taken from the section of Matthew that Pope Paul VI called the Magna Carta of the Kingdom of God (chs. 5, 6 and 7). Jesus' words warn us to avoid showy reality-tv style repentance. True repentance takes place between the individual and God (Mt 6:1). The proof is not in the number of viewers. It is in the changed life humbly lived in accordance with God's will. God is the only Viewer that matters.

*Dale S. Recinella, JD, MTS is in his 20th year serving as a Catholic chaplain for Florida's death row. He is an alumnus of Notre Dame Law School (1977) and the Ave Maria University Institute for Pastoral Theology (2009).*



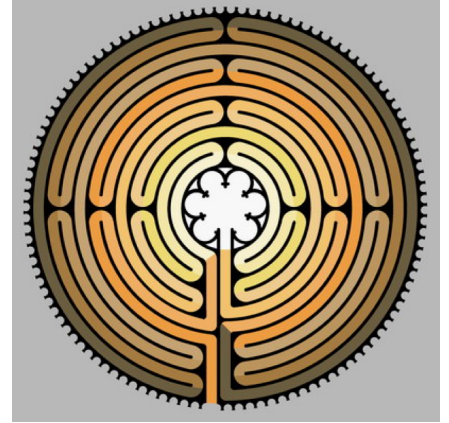
# First Sunday of Lent, February 18, 2018

Genesis 9:8-15; Psalms 25:4-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15



by Sister Joan Campbell SP

Human Life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2258) the Catechism tells us that God made us to show forth God's goodness and to share with us everlasting happiness in heaven. To gain the happiness of heaven, we must know, love and serve God in this world. (5) We are taught this from an early age.



But why did God make ME? One day I was talking to a young lad who said he was learning about CREATION. I asked him "What is CREATION?" He responded, "What Creation means to me is that God looked around one day and saw that I wasn't here and God made me!" This answer spoke volumes to my spiritual life and my ministry: "ME" with all of my gifts, talents, and uniqueness... Also "ME" with all of my challenges and tendencies... I am to respond to God's infinite LOVE in God's special plan just for ME.

In a prison setting, I would invite the inmates to spend some time exploring their personal, unique, individual relationships with God. During this Lenten season each of us can spend some time on our 'desert experience with God,' reflecting honestly with God and ourselves: Where am I on life's journey at this time? The Devil tempted Jesus (Mk 1:12-13). What are my temptations, misplaced actions and/or desires, unused God-given gifts?

Jesus challenges us: "Repent and Believe," (Mk 1:15). He died on the cross for MY sins. God loves ME with unconditional love - waiting for ME to respond. How can I renew at a deeper level - MY love for God? How can I deepen MY relationship with God as MY source of strength and peace?

Reflection on the words of Psalm 25 as they apply to ME:

Show ME your ways, Lord, teach me your PATH for ME

Do not remember the sins of MY youth & MY rebellious ways;

And according to your LOVE remember ME.

Continue to teach ME your PATH for ME

And help ME to transform MY LIFE to stay on MY PATH...

On a daily basis, I find the Labyrinth a helpful tool as I invoke the Holy Spirit to help ME on my path...

With a finger on the Labyrinth, I follow from the outside to the center. The Holy Spirit is in the center waiting for me.

On the way in I reflect on ways that have NOT been as God would have wanted for me that day...

Then in the middle, I BASK IN THE HOLY SPIRIT...

Reflecting on LOVE, PEACE, FORGIVENESS, JOY...

Once I feel "filled with The Spirit",

I take the path out, asking The Spirit to help me to keep on MY PATH, "The Way of the Lord" FOR ME on the next day...

I find this to be focused, helpful, specific, relevant and meaningful for ME...

Then I close with a prayer, something like:

"Thank you, God for everything in my life. The good and the bad.

Some were blessings and some were lessons."

Sister Joan Campbell S.P. is a former 1st Grade Teacher, School Principal, as well as the former Chaplain and Coordinator of the Detention Ministry for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Sister Joan currently lives in Seattle and is actively involved with the death penalty abolition movement in Washington State.





## Second Sunday of Lent, February 25, 2018

Genesis 22:1-2, 9A, 10-13, 15-18; Psalms 116:10, 15-19; Romans 8:31B-34; Mark 9:2-10



by Marie Kenyon



In the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Lent, the scripture demonstrates Jesus' divine nature through the narrative of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-10). We hear the mountaintop scene in which Jesus suddenly appears to James, John, and Peter in a whole new way: "And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them," (Mark 9: 2-3). The Apostles see Jesus conversing with Elijah and Moses. Finally, a cloud appears and a voice from the cloud tells them that "This is my beloved son. Listen to him," (Mark 9:7) Abruptly, the cloud and the vision of the prophets disappear and the Apostles were left alone only with the Jesus they knew standing before them.

This event allowed James, John, and Peter to see there was a lot more to their leader and teacher, Jesus, than they had originally perceived. Who the Apostles encountered was not the tired, hungry and tempted Jesus we heard about in last week's Gospel. Nor can we say that the transfigured Jesus manifested the ordinary human dimensions that were so visible during his daily encounters with people. The same Jesus who walked in the streets, who sat and ate with the sick, broken and sinners of society, is now in the company of two of the great prophets, Elijah and Moses. The contrast between the earthly Jesus and God's "beloved Son" could not be stronger. Yet we know, in faith, that in his humanity and in his divinity, Jesus continues to attract and draw us closer to him and his message: "It is good that we are here" (Mark 9:5).

We see Jesus transfigured from a human being with frailties into our divine Lord and Savior. Not only does this remind followers that Jesus is the Son of God, but on a deeper level, the Gospel is showing us an example of how to live as people. Despite our humanity, there is a divine element or grace within those who accept Jesus' message of love, faith, and hope. We can say that because of God's grace in us, each one of us reflects an inherent human dignity that transcends human agency.

This central tenet of God's grace is a crucial guide for Catholics as it teaches us how to live and relate to our world. The work of abolishing the death penalty, for example, seeks to end a practice in which the fallible and imperfect overtakes the divine in each person. As people of faith and goodwill, we can recognize that no matter how broken and sinful our lives may become, the light of grace can be a source of new life. The temptation to take life into our hands, through the practice of the death penalty or any other form of destructive violence, can never be an authentic form of societal renewal and transformation.

Only by drawing close to Jesus and listening to what he tells us can we hope to be transformed and redeemed. Indeed, in the story of the Transfiguration, we are reminded of the power of God's grace in our human lives. The story not only shows us how Jesus' humanity is transfigured but also teaches us that, in Jesus, each one of us can be changed and renewed.

*Marie Kenyon is the Director of the Peace & Justice Commission for the Archdiocese of St Louis. She previously had been the Managing Attorney for the Catholic Legal Assistance Ministry.*



## Third Sunday of Lent, March 4, 2018

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalms 19:8-11; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25



by Ingrid Delgado

When Catholics enter a sanctuary, we often look up to gaze and meditate upon an image of Christ crucified, the first-century method of execution. While our Savior was sinless and we are not, the realization that the Son of God died the death of a criminal calls us to quite literally recognize the face of our Lord in the imprisoned, in those sentenced to death, and in the executed.



May we remember this Lent, and always, that this death our Lord freely accepted and his subsequent rising from the dead offers redemption to all of us. We must not give in to the temptation of limiting God's inexhaustible mercy and grace by judging some people as beyond Christ's saving work. Yes, even the sins of those who have caused great harm are but a drop in God's ocean of mercy. And that mercy is also our only hope for healing for the victims who have been harmed by the sins of others.

In today's Gospel, we encounter Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers and driving out with a whip those who had turned the temple into a marketplace (Jn 2:13-15). In the midst of this cleansing from activities that were defacing its holiness and taking advantage of those who had journeyed long and far, he teaches them that He would raise the temple, His body, in three days (Jn 2:19).

Christ does not limit his resurrection to a select few. All of us are invited into the mystery of his life, death, and resurrection. Consistently in the Gospels, we see Christ's unlimited, unconditional giving of himself, intentionally encountering those on the peripheries of the time: Gentiles, tax-collectors, servants, women, children, widows, the ill, lepers; even to those who denied him and the thief who was executed next to him.

Who is on our peripheries today? Who are our modern lepers, today's untouchables? How can we imitate our Lord in cleansing our temples and our communities of injustices and abuses? How can we simultaneously join that righteous anger with the grace to unconditionally extend participation in Christ's saving work to all?

*Ingrid Delgado, Associate for Social Concerns and Respect Life for the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, represents the Conference on issues of human life, dignity and social justice before the state legislative and executive branches of government and private organizations. She initiates legislative networking with various groups, monitors and participates in the state appropriations process, and coordinates legislative and advocacy projects throughout the state.*



# Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 11, 2018

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Psalms 137:1-6; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21



by Rita Sloan, M.T.S



Reminders of God's boundless mercy, love, and patience permeate the readings for this 4th Sunday of Lent.

The ancient writers of Chronicles expound the infinite patience of God and God's ultimate mercy:

"Early and often did the Lord, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them," (2 Chr 36:15). The saga of repeated infidelities on the part of God's Chosen, the destruction of Jerusalem and years of captivity in Babylon end with the promise of restoration.

St. Paul spells out God's supreme gesture of love and mercy. "Dead in transgressions," humanity knows of its unworthiness, yet gratefully now lives because of Jesus Christ's self-giving, pure "gift of God," (Eph 2:4-10).

The evangelist John shouts God's great love for us: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," (Jn 3:16). Clearly, God continues to patiently abide our slowness to understand, our persistence in the wickedness of our own ways and our shunning of the light and the truth that is the Son.

One line from this gospel is particularly comforting and hopeful: "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him," (Jn 3:17). We are NOT condemned by God, our ultimate judge, wrong and sinful as we might be. We are only condemned by not choosing the Light. We condemn ourselves by turning from the Light.

There are lessons for all here. If God does not condemn us, how can we presume to condemn one another? Of course, this is the message we want everyone to hear, especially those in favor of the death penalty. We must remember that it is not our place to condemn anyone.

Yet, there are lessons here for those of us who work to end death penalty too, those of us who believe we are coming from the Light. This end comes more slowly than we want. We sometimes lose patience. We are equally capable of choosing the dark, bitterness, and even hate when we condemn those who think differently from us, those whom we might deem to be wrong-thinking and blind to the true light. We, too, are both in need of God's mercy, love, and patience, and we are called to emulate God's mercy, love, and patience as we strive to see the death penalty ended everywhere.

God of infinite mercy, teach us your patience and love that we might show others.

*Rita Sloan serves as the Coordinator for the Life Peace & Justice Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Reno, Nevada. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and a Masters of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) from the Franciscan School of Theology, formerly at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkley, CA. Rita also serves as Coordinator for the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Nevada, a program that primarily conducts nonviolence and conflict resolution workshops in prisons.*





# Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 18, 2018

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51: 3-4, 12-15; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33.



by Patricia Delgado

Jeremiah tells us that the Lord said, “I will make a new covenant with you” (Jer 31:31). Now, it’s not like the covenant of old, which was based on rules imposed from outside. That didn’t work! It led to disobedience. Instead, the Lord is making a new covenant with us, “placing it within us, writing it on our hearts”(Jer 31:33), forming a new relationship. “I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” (Jer 31:33). God says “All will know me, for I will forgive their sins, and remember them no more,” (Jer 31:34).



In Psalm 51, we ask God for a clean heart, for mercy and compassion!

And in the Gospel today, we hear that if we seek that loving and serving relationship with God, (if we really mean “Thy Kingdom Come”, when we pray), then Jesus promises “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (Jn 12:32).

I believe this is the Good News of Restorative Justice! We are all called to open our hearts to all those involved in the criminal justice system. As soon as we frame the conversation into “us” and “them”, identifying the “them” as different and less human than us, we can judge, exclude, punish, retaliate. God is telling us that keeping people identified as ex-convicts, or felons, long after they have completed their sentences, ensures that they will struggle for jobs and housing. Denying people dignity and a chance to rehabilitate is our sin, not theirs!

Jesus did not separate himself from the poor, the marginalized, the mentally ill. He did not treat them as second class. He modeled a different behavior for us, not the “us and them” so-called “justice system” we have accepted in our country—even while knowing that it doesn’t work—not for the victim, not for the offender, and not for the community.

When the victim is allowed to speak and be listened to, and the offender has a chance to accept responsibility, but allowed to explain what happened and why, and when he or she can apologize and offer restitution, what happened is not erased, but a path forward can be opened up that allows healing for all concerned.

I believe that God’s promise to have a new covenant with us, written on our hearts, can only happen if we are open to letting it happen. We cannot be afraid of relationships. Fr. Greg Boyle says that the sin of Dives (the rich man in Luke 16) was not in being rich, but in refusing to be in relationship with Lazarus. When we accept the dignity of all life, we will understand why the death penalty is contrary to Jesus’ teaching, why we are called to spread awareness of the injustices of our system.

If we open ourselves to listening and forming a relationship with people we are afraid of, we can, in good faith, ask for a clean heart, and a steadfast, willing spirit. And we can be ready for the time of judgment, ready to be drawn to Jesus.

*Patricia Delgado is a retired public school teacher and a mother and grandmother. I became involved with El Pasoans Against the Death Penalty through my work with Pax Christi, and in recent years was asked to help coordinate the Diocesan Restorative Justice Ministry. I am very grateful for all I have learned and the wonderful people I have met through my volunteer work.*



# Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, March 25, 2018

Mark 11:1-10; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalms 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

by Debbie Shinskie



“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness... God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

It is such a profound mystery that we are created in God's image and likeness, whether we speak of a newly-conceived child who is only a few microscopic cells in size or a frail person who is terminally ill or an inmate on death row. Each person is created out of love by God in accord with God's desire that each would spend eternity in communion with God. The physical appearances of human life in this world and the actions of a human person throughout their life do not alter the facts about humanity's creation or about God's desire for them.

The words of the psalmist in today's reading could easily be said by those imprisoned today:

“All who see me mock me;  
they curl their lips and jeer;  
they shake their heads at me” (Ps. 22:8)

Those who are imprisoned are often looked upon by society as subhuman, yet God's image and likeness does not reside in the labels we often apply to human life, labels that speak more of our own limitations than the wideness of God's love. It is not unusual for us to assign the label guilt or innocence while we have no way of knowing what is truly in the heart of the one we label. To use the idea of innocence as our only basis for protecting human life is risky at best. Once we reach the age of reason, innocence is arbitrary. At this point where does one decide how innocent a life must be before it is afforded dignity and protection? All have sinned. All fall short and depend on the grace of God.

As humans live our lives in various stages of innocence and guilt, what remains constant are the facts that we were created in God's image and likeness and God desires eternal communion with us. Even in our most heinous sins, God does not give up on us. God waits patiently for us to return in repentance. Never does God lack hope for our conversions. And in our work to uphold the dignity of each human person and to protect all life, neither must we.

When God reviewed creation on each of the preceding days, God noted that it was “good,” but with the creation of humanity, God “found it very good” (Gen. 1:31). The consistent ethic of life that the Church teaches and lives is one that applies this to each human person from conception until death, affording each life a profound respect and working to protect each life.

May we prayerfully remember that the value of each human life is not determined by innocence or guilt, but rather by the inherent dignity of the human person who is created in the image and likeness of God.

*Debbie Shinskie is the Director of the Respect Life Office for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.*





# Holy Thursday, March 29, 2018

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalms 116:12-13, 15-16BC, 17-18; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

by Sr. Janet M Ryan, OSF

Several years ago I lived in a L'Arche community in Clinton, Iowa and attended Holy Thursday Mass with David, one of my beloved housemates. David was a man in his 60's with Down syndrome and had said yes to the invitation to have his feet washed at the service.

In the silence of the church, as the priest approached us sitting in the aisle, David said with excitement, "Hi Father," followed loudly by, "What's your name?" Our names are so important! David wanted to connect with the priest. The priest answered, "Tony." "Hi Tony! I'm David."



When the cool water was poured over his feet, David laughed and exclaimed, "Its cold!" The priest nodded in agreement, apologized and dried his foot. David then proceeded to take off his other shoe and sock, despite the instructions given us, that only one foot would be washed. "You want me to wash the other one too, the priest asked? "Uh huh," David affirmed. When both feet were washed, David smiled broadly, hugged the priest, gave him a kiss on the cheek and said, "Thank you, Father."

After Mass a woman approached and told me she was moved to tears by David's interaction with the priest. She said despite being in the back and not being able to see, she had heard every word.

In my heart and mind, David beautifully embodied the humility of Christ that evening. He entered more fully into the sacred ritual of the washing of the feet than anyone I have ever witnessed -and we did a lot of foot-washing rituals in L'Arche! Like Peter, who wanted his hands and head washed in addition to his feet (Jn 13:9), David wasn't satisfied with just one foot being washed. He wanted more! He was all in. He opened himself fully, vulnerably to the hospitality and kindness of the priest and responded with deep gratitude. Do we have that courage and humility?

Christ calls us to wash one another's feet, to enter into the vulnerability and humanity of the other. This means reaching out to those around us who are in need and entering into their need. Are we courageous enough to do this? Are we humble enough to allow others into our brokenness, vulnerability, and need?

Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet was a profound and uncomfortable gesture for the disciples. Peter initially refused, "You will never wash my feet!" (Jn 13:8) May we pray for the courage, grace, and humility to say 'yes' to washing each other's feet.

*Sr. Janet M. Ryan, OSF is a Clinton, Iowa Franciscan who lived in L'Arche communities in Clinton, Iowa and St. Louis, MO. She currently lives in a Catholic Worker House on the South side of Chicago and works at Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation.*



# Good Friday of The Lord's Passion, March 30, 2018

Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalms 31:2, 6, 12–13, 15–16, 17, 25; Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9; John 18:1–19:42



by Terri Steinberg



Today, we reflect on the Passion and death of our Lord, one of the most talked about executions of an innocent man in all of history. In today's Gospel from John (Jn 18:1--19:42), we hear about the horrific torture Jesus endured for us, and wonder how so many could stand by, demand that He be crucified and then watch? Then I think about how the death penalty is still in practice now, in the year 2018, and wonder how we can allow this cycle of violence to continue.

I think about Mary, his mother, who sat helplessly at Jesus's side, watching as her son was beaten, and hung on the cross in such a horrific way. I have known her suffering as my own son faced 3 separate execution dates for a crime he did not commit. It is a pain no mother should have to endure.

I think about Jesus's friends who turned away, like Peter did out of fear, and also of John who stayed with Mary. Are we Peter, or are we John? Who would Jesus expect us to be?

Our God in Heaven sent the Son to teach lessons of mercy, justice, love, and compassion. All of these lessons rolled together are what is needed in response to those who offend us. The killing of another human being- a child of God, no matter how flawed- will never undo a crime that was committed or honor those lessons Jesus came to teach. The question should not be 'do they deserve to die for their crime,' the question is do we have a right to kill them and most importantly, do we have to? The death penalty should not be about what crime they committed but instead about who WE are and what WE do in response.

In Psalm 31, we ask God to rescue us and give refuge, so we must show mercy and give refuge to the least of our brothers and sisters- those who have sinned against us. There is nothing merciful in the use of the death penalty. We are each imperfect souls, worth so much more than our worst mistake, and we believe in redemption through our Lord. In the Lord's prayer, we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses" and promise to "forgive those who trespass against us". If we expect forgiveness, we first must forgive! Jesus came to teach us a better way and died for our sins in the hope of our salvation. He taught us to "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34-35) and "Whatever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to Me" (Mt 25:40).

As you reflect on the passion of our Lord, recognize that all life has dignity and worth, and the use of the death penalty contradicts our belief that ALL life is sacred. Please join with the Catholic Mobilizing Network to respect all life, calling for an end to the use of the death penalty. Our faith calls us to be better.

*Terri Steinberg is a member of Virginians for Alternatives for the Death Penalty, Journey of Hope from Violence to Healing and is a part of Catholic Mobilizing Network Speakers Bureau. Terri's son Justin has spent over 10 years on death row and now faces a life sentence for a crime he did not commit.*



# Easter Sunday, The Resurrection of the Lord, April 1, 2018

Acts 10:34A, 37-43; Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 5:6B-8; Luke 24:13-35

by Alexandra Carroll

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! These words greet us with excitement and promise on the Easter morning. After 40 days of fasting, prayer and reflective contemplation, we mark the resurrection of our Lord.

As we begin the Easter season, with the promise of the Kingdom of God now clearer than ever, we are faced with the question: how can we witness to the resurrection in our lives? The readings for today challenge us to live the resurrection in the midst of a broken world.

The hope and expectation of new life are cornerstones of the Christian life. Yet, we live in a world where the promise and glory of the resurrection is often overpowered by the pain and suffering of so many.

Can the promises of Christ be true? Is new life with God really upon us? Questions like these flood the minds of us all as we watch families being torn apart by deportation, children growing up amongst violence and war, and a culture of vengeance furthered through the continued use of the death penalty.

The cry from the dismayed disciples along the road to Emmaus echoes this lament: "But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel," (Lk 24:21).

In the midst of all this, the events of Easter serve as a reminder of the truly countercultural nature of our God. In light of the events of the resurrection suddenly the prophecies of the scriptures make sense. After the disciples encountered Christ on the road to Emmaus, "their eyes were opened and they recognized him," (Lk 24:31).

This is the task of the Christian. As we continue to live as an Easter people we are called to be "witnesses of all that he did," (Acts 10:39). That witness to the promise and joy of Easter Sunday can become manifest in our encounters with others. Welcoming the stranger, sharing a meal with the outcast, visiting the prisoner, or presence to those experiencing sorrow are all encounters that Christ invites us to engage in. Just as the disciples encounter Christ in the midst of their dismay and found the faith to witness to the power of the resurrection (Acts 10:42, Lk 24:35), so too in our despair over the troubles of our world can we find the glory of the resurrection in our encounters with others.

Clinton Lee Young, a death row inmate in Texas who received a stay of execution in October of 2017, further illustrates this power of encounter. In a letter to Catholic Mobilizing Network, Clinton wrote:

*"Many have written with sadness, because of my situation. Sure I might not have physical freedom beyond the confines of this cell. Though I am blessed in so many more ways. The endless love of so many. The ability to reach out & inspire others in positive ways. Sadly many that are free are locked in their own prisons. They never get to truly appreciate the joys of love and life."*

We must remember the joy of Easter Sunday. Despite the sadness and confusion and despair, we may be feeling, the hope and promise of new life must not escape our view. As we continue into the Easter season, we must open ourselves to the witness of those we encounter so as to live our lives as a witness to all that came to fruition on Easter, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24: 32).

Even on death row, Clinton Young experiences the power of encounter, "*The people in my life make the cell door mean so little.*"

What can you do to encounter the risen Christ in your life? How can we live as witnesses to the resurrection in our broken world? This Easter, let's allow ourselves to be open to encountering the risen Christ as he appears in our broken world. May the joy and promise of the resurrection carry you into new life.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Alexandra Carroll, M.T.S. is CMN's Director of Communications and came to CMN after receiving her Masters in Theological Studies (M.T.S.) from Boston College. While living and studying in Boston, Alexandra became a weekly volunteer with the Catholic prison ministry at the Suffolk County House of Corrections.





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