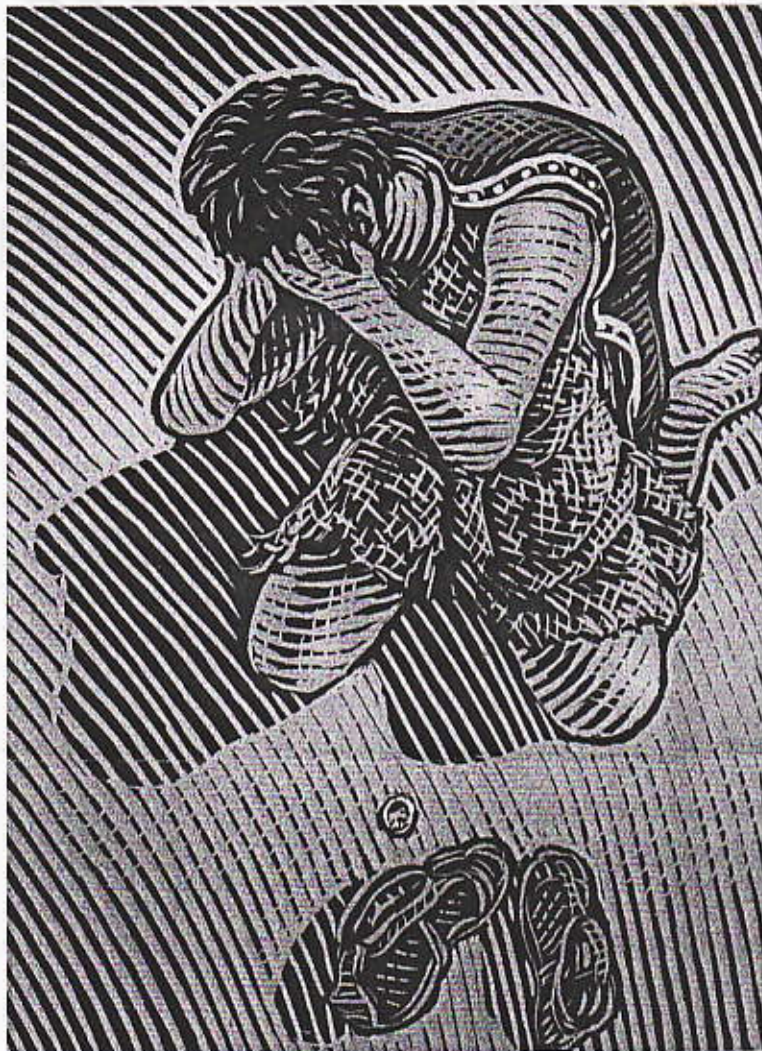


Fourth Sunday of Lent



Prayer for Homecoming

Good and gracious God,
you sent your Son to teach us how to love
and to show us how to walk
on the path that will lead us home to you.

For too long we have gone our own way,
wanting to see the world for ourselves
and not wanting you to interfere.
Now in our repentance
we turn to you and to our home.

Even now, we see you standing
in the distance,
searching for the sign that we have
come back.

We long to be gathered into your arms
and welcomed home as beloved children.
In your mercy and love, bring us back
and help us know your abundant love.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

March 14, 2010 God's Prodigal Love

The parable for this Sunday (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32) is often called the prodigal son because the younger son wastes his inheritance in high living. But in so many ways, this story is about a prodigal God who lavishes his love on everyone. In the mind of the Pharisees, God wastes his love on sinners when there are so many righteous people who deserve it more. This was the opinion of the elder son who considered himself a slave in his own household. By contrast, the younger son was willing to let go of his birthright and become a slave if it meant he could return to his family. The father shows both sons the love that he cannot help but give.

He rejoices in the return of the younger because that love knows no boundaries.

Even when the younger son was away, the father loved him, but the son was not ready to receive love. So it is with us. God pours out his love on us whether we are near or far. Sometimes, we squander it in high living, not knowing how much we need God's grace and strength. Other times, we grow jealous and fearful that if God pours out his love on someone else, there will never be enough for us. But when we turn our hearts back to him, we recognize a love that has never turned us away. This love is not limited and does not choose one over another. There is always enough.

This Week at Home



Monday, March 15

Laetare Sunday

Yesterday, the fourth Sunday of Lent, is called *Laetare* Sunday. *Laetare* means “Rejoice!” and the opening prayer began with that word. We are at the midpoint of the Lenten journey. This week, it would be appropriate each day to write down those insights or blessings, however small, that give us joy, and for which we are grateful. Thank God for these gifts before you go to bed each evening.

Tuesday, March 16

Living Water

The prophet Ezekiel experienced vivid and detailed visions. At the beginning of his ministry, he saw a wheel within a wheel and four winged creatures. Toward the end of his prophecies he had a vision of the heavenly temple—the glorious dwelling place of God. In today’s readings (Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12) we hear about Ezekiel’s vision of a river of life flowing from the heavenly temple. Then in the Gospel according to John, Jesus identifies himself as the “living water,” and we hear that those who drink of that water will have eternal life. When you have a glass of water today, let it remind you of the water Jesus offers.

Wednesday, March 17

Saint Patrick

Patrick, who was born in Britain, was captured as a boy and sent to Ireland as a slave. It is recorded that during his captivity he grew in faith. After several years, he escaped and returned home. When he was older, a voice in a vision urged him to return to Ireland and preach the Gospel. He is one of three patrons of Ireland (along with Brigid and Columba) and also the patron saint of engineers.

Thursday, March 18

Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius

These two Greek brothers of the ninth century became missionaries to the Slavic peoples. Cyril, a doctor of the Church, is especially known for his catechetical lectures to those who were to be baptized. They dealt with Christian faith and practice and express compassion and love for those seeking initiation. The final five lectures comprised the “mystagogia”—the explanation of the sacred mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) takes much of its form from the methods of Cyril and from other early teachers of the faith.

Friday, March 19

Solemnity of Saint Joseph

We do not know much about Joseph other than that he was constantly being awakened by an angel to take care of Mary and Jesus. But he has become a role model for fathers everywhere who have their own sleepless nights as they worry about doing their best for their families. In legend, he was a carpenter who taught Jesus the skills he knew. The litany to Saint Joseph calls him just, prudent, strong, obedient, and faithful. Let us pray for the grace to follow his example today.

Saturday, March 20

Transform My Heart

“Bright Son of God, do a miracle for me. Transform my heart. Surely your taking flesh and blood was far more difficult. . . .” The beginning of this fifteenth-century Celtic prayer pleads with God to do what some of us might find impossible—to change our hearts for the better, and it does so by reminding God of the miracle of the Incarnation. While transforming us might be easy for God, it is not always easy for us to accept God’s grace. Pray for that grace by using this prayer tonight.



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 Keeping the Seasons
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