

April 1, 2018

Easter Sunday

Today Jesus is risen! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

As you celebrate the truth and the promise of the Resurrection, we invite you to meditate on the following passage from St. Paul, who proclaims the promise of the resurrection for all of creation. If you have some time, we especially encourage you to pray this passage using the *lectio divina* technique.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

Romans 8: 18 – 25



Weekly Worship Aid for Lent 2018



Inter-religious Working Group
on Extractive Industries

About this Worship Aid

The Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries produced this worship aid. It is a complement to our online Lenten calendar, which you can access here: www.justresponse.faith/lent-2018-calendar

The calendar is an invitation to use the season of Lent to grow closer to creation and to explore the lives of vulnerable communities impacted by extractive industries. Each day of this daily devotional features a prayer, activity, or action.

This worship aid is a compilation of the weekly scripture reflections found in the calendar. By providing these reflections in a booklet format, we hope to enrich your weekly worship experience.

Thank you for accompanying us and all vulnerable communities into the holiest time of the year.

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Philippines rainforest. Modeled after the “Stations of the Cross,” he developed the “Stations of the Forest,” designed to lament the stages in the death of a part of God’s creation.

Fr. Busch’s “Stations of the Forest” reminds us that the same forces that crucified Jesus continue to crucify today. As Pope Francis said during his 2016 visit to Colombia: “you want to place all your suffering, and that of the thousands of victims, at the feet of Jesus Crucified, so that united to his suffering, it may be transformed into blessing and forgiveness so as to break the cycle of violence.”¹⁵

Just like the Philippines rainforest, the Amazon rainforest is experiencing its own crucifixion. Over the past 50 years, extractives and other industries have destroyed twenty percent of it. Extractives contribute not only to deforestation, but also to water pollution. In one community with a gold mine, the fish local peoples eat test positive for mercury. These projects also forcibly remove indigenous communities from their ancestral homelands.¹⁶

In 2014, the Catholic Church in Pan-Amazonia founded a Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network – REPAM – as “God’s answer to this heartfelt and urgent need to care for the life of people so they are able to live in harmony with nature.”¹⁷ Pope Francis knows that the Amazon rainforest is vital for the health of life on Earth, calling it one of the “richly biodiverse lungs of our planet.”¹⁸ Today, as we listen to “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor,” let us remember the plea of those who greeted Jesus in Jerusalem: “Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest” (Mark 11: 10). Deliver us, Lord, from our suffering.

Meditate on the wounds of the Earth are united to your wounds and Jesus’ wounds. **Which natural habits in your area – be it a forest, a mountain range, a wetland – are being crucified?**

¹⁵ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/september/documents/papa-francesco_20170908_viaggioapostolico-colombia-incontrodiapregiera.html

¹⁶ http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/amazon/amazon_threats/other_threats/amazon_mining/

¹⁷ http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/10/15/pope_announces_synod_of_bishops_for_the_pan-amazon_region/1343151

¹⁸ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

March 25, 2018

Palm Sunday

Creation is Crying Out: “Hosanna! Hosanna!”

Today marks the beginning of Jesus’ journey to the cross, and, ultimately, to his resurrection. Though he enters Jerusalem today in triumph (Mark 11: 8 – 10), we know that in five-days’ time he will be tortured and condemned to a slow, painful death.

As Jesus enters the city, we hear the people “crying out: Hosanna!” (Mark 11: 9). “Hosanna” comes from an ancient Hebrew phrase that translates as, “save, we pray.” In other words, the people of Jerusalem are asking for deliverance, pleading for the Son of God to set them free from their suffering.

Jesus will make this same plea in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking God to deliver him from the pain of the Cross (Matthew 26: 39 & 42). That deliverance will not come – Jesus *will* be tortured and he *will* die.

In moments like these, we cry out like the Psalmist: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Psalm 22: 2). Those who ridicule me, those who brutalize my body, surround me on all sides, but God doesn’t seem to be here (Psalm 22: 2, 8, & 17). How do we respond to painful times like these? One way is prayer.

Our Catholic tradition gives us many ways to meditate on suffering and death. One way is the “Stations of the Cross.” By praying the “Stations,” we make a spiritual pilgrimage through the scenes of Christ’s passion. When we do this, we unite our pain to Jesus’ pain and grow closer to him.

Opening yourself up to other people’s pain is one of the most powerful ways you can love them. It’s one of the ways God chose to love us. In the 1980s in the Philippines, Columban Father Vinny Busch wanted his parishioners to experience the pain of something they neglected: the

February 14, 20218

Ash Wednesday

Scripture tells us that our ancestors in the faith used ashes to express their grief, as well as the sorrow they felt for their wrongdoings. By putting ashes on our forehead today, we can hear more clearly God’s open invitation: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

But these ashes also remind us of another truth: that “we are dust and to dust we shall return.” These words teach us that, like the incarnate Jesus, we are a part of creation – we are in an ongoing relationship with all members of this God-made family.

As we begin our Lenten journey this year, let us recall those times when we committed wrong against one of our sisters or brothers – whether that be a human being, other creatures, or the Earth itself. By using this calendar for the next six weeks, we invite you explore the ways we humans have harmed creation, particularly through an extractive model of development, and consider ways that we can begin to heal our relationships.

May the ashes we carry with us throughout this day call us to a change of heart: “Remember, we are dust and to dust we shall return. Repent, then, and believe in the Gospel.”

The First Sunday of Lent

“We are all sisters and brothers”

Today’s first reading takes place after the destructive waters of the flood have subsided. We hear God saying this to those who found salvation on the ark: “I am now establishing my covenant with you [Noah] and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you” (Genesis 9: 9-10). God establishes many covenants throughout scripture and all of them have two things in common: God makes a promise, and brings those within the covenant closer to God. In today’s reading, we see God’s desire to be closer to Noah and his descendants (which are all of us) and to all creation.

Sometimes we forget that humans are not alone on this planet. We share it with hundreds of millions of other plants and animals, each of them created by God. Scripture speaks often of God’s love for creation. The Psalms remind us that God “know[s] every bird in the heights” (Psalm 50: 11) and that God “is good to all, compassionate toward all [God’s] works” (Psalm 145: 9).

God wants to be close to all creation, and has made clear by the covenant with Noah, wants humans to be close to all creatures too. In today’s Gospel, we see Jesus doing just that: “The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him” (Mark 1: 13). As Jesus begins preparing for his Earthly ministry, the Gospel tells us that he wasn’t alone. God’s creatures accompanied him. Even as Jesus was being tempted by the Devil, God’s creatures stayed by his side.

Extractives industries take a huge toll on creation’s wellbeing, leading to contamination and hurting ecosystems and the creatures that live there. As one example, the BP oil spill of 2010, and the chemicals used in the cleanup process, caused severe animal mutation. Scientists and fishermen

A disregard for the relationships that bind us together is sin, and this sin seeps into all areas of human endeavor, including extractive industries. “Lucrative and politically important extractive projects can become entangled with abuses by unaccountable security forces; undermine the livelihoods of families forced to relocate to make way for them; and fuel government corruption.”¹³

One way extractive industries contribute to corruption is by mining “conflict resources.” These are resources extracted in a conflict zone, and then sold to the international market.

Coltan was such a resource during the Ituri conflict from 1999 to 2003 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Armies, rebel groups, and outside actors mined coltan to finance their war. By 2006, the war killed nearly 60,000 people. Thousands more were forced from their homes. Coltan is used to make tantalum, a component of cellphones, computers, and other electronics.¹⁴

The allure of power, money, or consumer goods seduces us into ignoring how our actions might impact our sisters and brothers. A rebel’s quest for power, a mining company’s pursuit of money, my desire for a phone, directly and indirectly allows for the harming and displacement of vulnerable communities. If we take a moment to remember the ties that bind us together, perhaps we can become less susceptible to breaking the covenant God makes with us all.

All of the sins we commit in some way weaken one or more of our relationships. **Take a moment to think about how your thoughts, your words, what you have done and what you have not done have hurt the relationships in your life – your relationship with yourself, with God, with your sisters and brothers, and with all creation.**

¹³ <https://www.hrw.org/topic/business/oil-mining-and-natural-resources>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_resource

March 18, 2018

The Fifth Sunday of Lent **“Repairing the Covenant We’ve Broken”**

Today’s readings remind us of the true purpose of Lent: to prepare to meet our Risen Lord by repenting for those times when we did not behave as well as we should have. If we’re honest, we fail, and we fail often. But we cannot despair when we do. We must ask God to “create a clean heart in me” (Psalm 51: 12) because God has promised that God “will forgive [our] evildoing and remember [our] sin no more” (Jeremiah 31: 34).

We are comforted because we know that God’s mercy is greater than our wrongdoing. But usually, after we have felt bad about something wrong we did and confessed it with an open and contrite heart, we end up sinning again. How does this keep happening, we wonder. Weren’t we truly sorry the last time?

We can discern part of the reason for our problem if we pay close attention to God’s words in the first reading: “for they broke my *covenant*” (Jeremiah 31: 32). Recall the readings of February 18th, about God establishing the covenant between God, humans, and animals. In our reflection from that day, we said that a covenant is a promise God makes, and a binding together of those within the covenant. The relationship between God, humans, and creation grew deeper because of that covenant. This week, God is saying that we fall into sin when we break our end of the deal. In other words, we sin when we forget that we are in relationship with others: with God, with our fellow humans, and with the rest of creation.

Pope Francis teaches us that “disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbor, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with the other, with God, and with the earth. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tell us that life itself is endangered.”¹²

(who depend on their catch for their livelihood) discovered shrimp born without eyes or eye sockets, fish with lesions and oozing sores, and crabs born without claws. Those chemicals also killed marine plant-life and accelerated beach erosion.¹

The Catechism teaches us that “each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own ways a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. [Humankind] must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things.”²

Intimating Jesus in the desert, St. Francis of Assisi understood that he was related to all creatures. His “response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection.”³

As we reflect on today’s readings and our own lives, **how might we better honor the covenant made between God, humans, and the whole of creation?**

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_impact_of_the_Deepwater_Horizon_oil_spill

² http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p1s2c1p5.htm

³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

¹² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

The Second Sunday of Lent

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”

Today’s first reading can seem a little terrifying. Is God really asking Abraham to kill his son? Traditionally we think God’s request is a “testing” of Abraham. But a closer look at God’s surprising reversal shows that it’s not a test but a lesson in the fruits of discipleship.

Following God’s will can lead us into dark places, full of violence and death. The passion of Jesus and the lives of the martyrs teach us this. But just when we think violence and death have won, God proves us wrong. The great paradox of Jesus’ Resurrection is exactly this: that sometimes we have to be willing to put everything on the line – including our life – so that the fullness of life may be possible.

The story of Abraham and Isaac from today’s first reading teaches us this same truth. Abraham is willing to enter the places of violence and death in order to follow God’s will, and as a result, he finds instead the gift of life and peace (Genesis 22: 16 – 18). We get a hint of this in the Gospel as well, when Jesus instructs Peter, James, and John to keep the Transfiguration a secret until the “Son of Man had risen from the dead” (Mark 9: 9).

Throughout history, we see brave women and men following Abraham’s and Jesus’ examples. They offer up their lives doing God’s work. These include those who die protecting the natural world. In 2017, 185 “environmental defenders” were killed protecting their community’s land and the ecosystems they depend on. Whether they are “wildlife rangers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or indigenous land rights activists in Brazil,” on average four environmental defenders are killed every week across the world.⁴ Corporations carrying out these extractive projects are often linked to these profit-motivated killings.

Every country is grappling with the consequences of climate change. In Bolivia for example, important natural resources are disappearing. Benito was a fisherman who used to make a living on Lake Poopó. This lake was the second largest in the country, covering 390 square miles. By December of 2015, however, it had completely dried up. Benito is now without a job.

Francisco is a farmer in Bolivia who is also suffering from climate change. Because the rain is coming less often, he cannot grow enough food to live on and he does not have enough water for his farm animals.¹⁰

Because of climate change, Benito and Francisco struggle to earn a living. Extractive industries create a significant amount of the air pollution that causes climate change. Pope Francis echoes global scientific and international consensus when he writes that, “we know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels needs to be progressively replaced without delay.”¹¹ Pope Francis is like one of those messengers sent by God to Judah in the first reading, urging the people to mend their ways. What choice will we make today? Will we listen to God’s messengers, or will we mock them?

Despite the grim picture that pollution and climate change paints, we know there’s hope. God is loving and merciful, inviting us to amend our ways. God is constantly sending messengers our way to help guide us in the right direction.

How have you seen the effects of pollution and climate change in your community? How are God’s messengers calling you and your community to act differently?

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2017/jul/13/the-defenders-tracker>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVjYhAAPxw>

¹¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

March 11, 2018

The Fourth Sunday of Lent “The Voices of those Crying Out in the Wilderness”

In today’s first reading, the princes, the priests, and the people of Judah offend God with many misdeeds. In particular, scripture tells us that they pollute the Lord’s temple (2 Chronicles 36: 14). Despite the many messengers God sends to warn the people, they do not listen. They mock God’s messengers and continue desecrating holy places. Finally, God exiles the people from their lands - it lays in waste as they flee (2 Chronicles 36: 15 – 16 & 21).

This cautionary tale has been a warning for all ages, and continues to be a warning today. We can see the parallels between the time of Judah and our time: we pollute the land we live on; people warn us, urging us to change our ways, but we send them away in derision. How far will we push these parallels? Will we be exiled from our lands because we’ve let them lay in waste?

Today’s Psalm speaks for the whole people of Judah when it cries out that “by the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion” (Psalm 137: 1). The people acknowledge their sins, but only after it is too late – the damage is done.

In our own day, we can see the damage we’re causing. Our pollution brings disease and death. Pollution of all kinds is “responsible for an estimated nine million premature deaths” each year.⁸ These nine million people often live in impoverished countries, or they live in impoverished communities in wealthy countries. A specific kind of pollution, air pollution, is causing the climate to change radically and dangerously. Climate change kills 250,000 people a year by exacerbating problems like malnutrition, malaria, and diarrhea, among many other problems.⁹

⁸ <http://www.thelancet.com/commissions/pollution-and-health>

⁹ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs266/en/>

The practice of killing environmental defenders has been going on for a long time. In 2005, hired mercenaries murdered Sr. Dorothy Stang, S.N.D. for trying to protect the Amazon rainforest and the rights of indigenous communities to manage their own land. Before they killed her, they asked Sr. Dorothy if she had any weapons. She said her only weapon was her Bible and then began reading the Beatitudes.⁵ Brazil continues to be a dangerous place for environmental defenders. In 2016, Brazil boasted the highest number of assassinations of environmental defenders in the world based on sheer numbers. Honduras was the deadliest in terms of murders per capita.⁶

Martyrdom is terrifying – even Jesus was afraid – and God doesn’t call everyone to it. But we are all called to hear “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” – to stand in solidarity with creation. Faced with the oftentimes difficult and scary task of discipleship, we can all take comfort from St. Paul’s counsel in today’s second reading: “If God is for us, who can be against us? ... Who will bring a charge against God’s chosen ones? It is God who acquits us, who will condemn?” (Romans 8: 31 & 33)

If we want to live in a world that respects life and promotes peace, we have to be willing to confront the violence and the death we cause with our throwaway culture. In recognition of the sacrifice that environmental defenders like Sr. Dorothy make, what violence have we committed against the natural world? **How does the call to discipleship lead you to act differently?**

⁵ <http://www.sndohio.org/sister-dorothy/expanded-story>

⁶ <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defenders-earth/>

March 4, 2018

The Third Sunday of Lent

“More precious than gold, sweeter than honey”

In today’s Gospel, we hear one of the most famous stories from Jesus’ ministry: him driving out the business owners and the moneychangers from the temple. This is one of the few times in the Gospel where we see Jesus mad – really mad. But he doesn’t exactly explain himself. Yes, he rebukes the people for turning his “Father’s house [into] a marketplace” (John 2: 14 – 16). But what is so bad about that in the first place?

God’s commandment in the first reading gives us the answer: “You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourself . . . you shall not bow down before them or worship them” (Exodus 20: 3 – 5). As today’s Psalm explains, this is not only a matter of God’s supremacy or jealousy. God is trying to tell us that we need God (Psalm 19: 8 – 12), and our ultimate desire is to be in a relationship with God, and that things and money and power get in the way of this relationship.

When we care too much about wealth or power, our relationship with God suffers. The First Commandment is not so much a rule to be followed, as it is the gift-tag taped to the greatest gift possible. God is more precious than gold, is sweeter than syrup or honey (Psalm 19: 11). Why chase after the second or third best thing when you can have the absolutely best thing imaginable? God refreshes our soul, brings joy to our heart, and light to our eyes (Psalm 19: 8 – 9).

That is why Jesus is so upset. We don’t need business owners and moneychangers selling us a false bill of goods. We already have God. God gives our lives all the meaning and happiness we could ever need. By accumulating money and consuming things we distance our soul from this truth, and we deaden our senses to the beauties and pleasures that God gives us.

Despite being 4.3% of the world’s population, Americans consume 24% of the world’s energy resources. That’s an extravagant amount of consumption. And that energy isn’t limited to our electric bill. Every time you buy something, you buy the energy that was used to make that thing. On average, every time anyone spends an American dollar, the energy equivalent of half a liter of oil is burned to produce what that dollar buys.⁷

Extractive industries are responsible for many of the raw ingredients in what we consume. We extract energy products like oil and coal, and also the contents of bottled water, paper products, and jewelry. Because Americans consume much more than we need, our energy footprint is considerably larger and extractive industries grow in order to meet our demands.

Even though we consume a lot, does it satisfy us? Are we any closer to God because of the stuff we have? Are we any better off? Does it make us happier? Perhaps our lives are more comfortable, but is that how we measure the success of our lives?

This Lent we are invited to return to the one thing that truly matters, and to get rid of all the things that don’t. **When you’re at home today, look through your house and ask of your belongings, “Does this help me sustain or deepen my relationship with God?” Ask yourself that question the next time you go shopping.**

⁷ <https://public.wsu.edu/~mreed/380American%20Consumption.htm>