

St. Mark's Messenger

March 2025

FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS



Lots of people talk about “giving up something” for Lent – you know, things like chocolate. I personally have already sworn off brussel sprouts. But a healthier practice is to add something, and I suggest that we focus on empathy.

If you would like a one-word summary of Matthew 25, it's empathy. (Please read the verses again: Matthew 25:31-46). Our Gospel lessons have been preparing us for the journey. On March 2, we journeyed with Jesus and three disciples to his moment of Transfiguration.

But what happens next? That's where empathy kicks in. Jesus helps a desperate father whose child is ill. Living the Christian life is not our having a private “Jesus moment,” though that is important. It's about living our life in the world, in all of its distressing shortcomings.

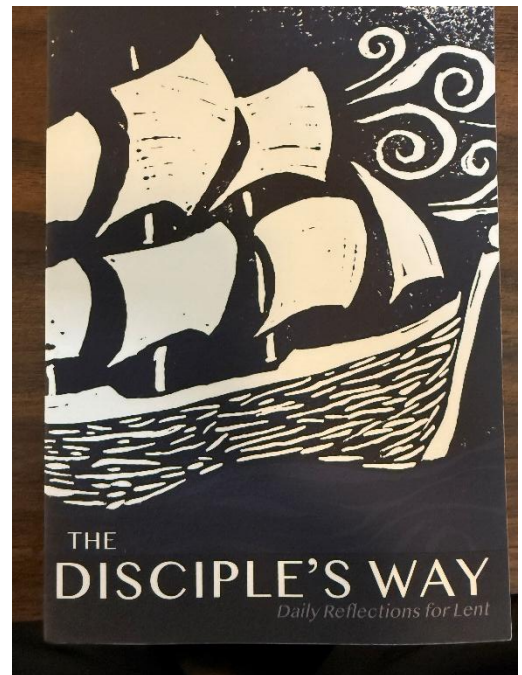
I do not think that the world has become kinder or gentler since the time when Jesus walked this earth. Look at what's happening in Ukraine or Gaza. Or talk with your neighbors who are hearing news about possible cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, the “safety net” that especially affects seniors and the needy. Our Homeless Shelter is literally running out of money.

Dear friends, who is our neighbor? This is a question of empathy – what's in our hearts.

Lent is a time for reflection and repentance, for amendment of life, for heading in a better direction. **It begins with our Ash Wednesday service at 5PM on March 5.**

We have forty days to prepare for Easter, and St. Mark's offers some old AND new ways to help you on your journey. First, we'll have an introduction to *The Chosen* on a Sunday after church. We'll have a light meal and then watch an episode together and talk about it.

But there's more! Besides our Sunday worship, we invite you to participate in the Wednesday service for healing at 10AM, an Adult Enquirers' class at a time TBD, Stations of the Cross on Fridays at 12:15, our Adult Forum on Sundays at 9AM, and an independent study-reflection called *The Disciples' Way*.



St. Mark's will give you your own copy. See Father John to get yours. Will you spend 10 minutes each day reading a Lenten reflection? I will. Have a blessed Lent! Father John✠

STATIONS OF THE CROSS: WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR JESUS ON GOOD FRIDAY?

Join us as we follow Jesus to the Cross. Stations of the Cross will be held on Fridays at 12:15PM. Please join us for a quiet, contemplative reflection on what our Lord experienced on Good Friday. At Christmas we contemplated the baby in the manger; now it is time to see Him on the Cross.

Were you there when they crucified our Lord?

RECONCILIATION OF A PENITENT

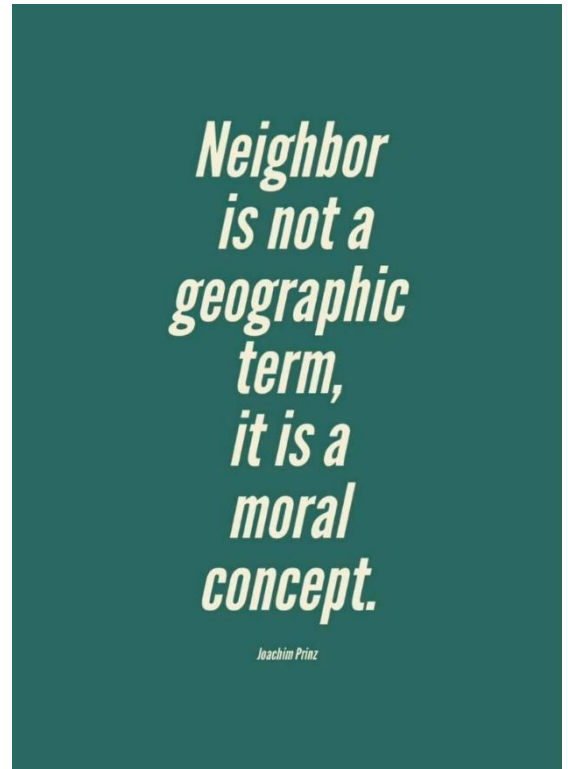


I invite you to meet with me privately any time during Lent to participate in an ancient spiritual practice: private confession and absolution. We need both collective confession (what we say in Morning Prayer as well as at the Eucharist) and private confession. The purpose is reconciliation, not a guilt trip.

This is a holy, private conversation about your spiritual life, and we should find thirty minutes to talk and pray together in my office or the chapel.

GETTING TO KNOW THE DISCIPLES DURING LENT

Do you want to discover a deeper understanding of the role and relationships between Jesus and his Apostles and Disciples? We invite you to join the journey by sharing in the Gospel and experience it come to life through *The Chosen*, a TV series that has been translated in to many different languages. Created and directed by Dallas Jenkins, this true to life story has brought me closer to understanding the journey through the Gospel as told through those who knew Jesus best. Want to learn more? Go to thechosen.tv.com. You can find episodes from Season 1-4 on Amazon Prime and other outlets, like YouTube. – Tracey McKee



MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD AND BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

In January MHC helped 440 people with food in addition to BBT providing a home-cooked meal to about 40 people + 15 more take-out meals. We even had a few left-over meals for patrons of MHC. Thanks, Chef Pete, and all of the great crew of helpers for another wonderful meal.

PROPERTY UPDATE



To improve seating comfort in the church, the Vestry has approved our pew cushion project (yay!). All we need to do is raise \$7,650 to pay for them. We have already received pledges for \$5,400 from nine households. The cushions will arrive about three months after we place our order. **If you're willing to make a pledge, please let Father John know. You do not need to pay until May.**

To improve safety, we will install a handrailing on the stairway leading from the sanctuary to the parish house. Though at one time there was a railing, it was removed many years ago.

To improve hospitality in our parish house, we will replace our long, heavy rectangular tables with 5-foot round tables. We did a "trial" session with our guests at Breaking Bread Together, and they unanimously said that the tables made conversations easier and personable. If you would like one or more of our current tables, please let Father John know. It's "first come, first served."

Finally, we need to clean up and organize the kitchen. Chef Pete has helped us eliminate duplicate utensils, but we need to do some serious de-cluttering one Sunday after church. It will not take more than an hour. Our kitchen workers will be grateful. We'll announce the date soon.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S OUR WAY

There's nothing like a dab of dust on your forehead to make you remember your own mortality. Yes, we are dust and to dust we shall return. But how can we have a positive, meaningful impact on our world even after we die? Having a will is a good start.

Look around at the beauty of our church and the richness of our ministries. What we have is a gift from those who came before us and who loved this church deeply. Remember that no living member paid a dollar for the construction of our first church (1824) or our current one (1895s).

Nor did we pay for the cemetery, parish house, the rectory, the beautiful windows or organ. All of these are gifts from our ancestors, and we have an obligation to preserve and sustain them for future generations. More than half of our income comes from our endowment funds. Every dollar in our endowment came from someone's will.

Have you remembered St. Mark's?

I am a priest, not an accountant or a certified financial planner, but I know that there are many ways of making gifts. Please talk with me if you have some idea of what you'd like to do but are uncertain how to do it; I can refer you to someone who can give you expert advice.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

2: DOROTHY HANNON AND DEB VAUGHN; 7: DR. KIM KOLONICH; 11: SANDY JENKINSON AND CAROL SMITH; 13: NANCY LAUB; 18: CAROLE MEASE

PRAYER LIST

We pray for Myra Bannon, Judy Clare, Shirley Mancino, Tony Hatfield-Nicholson, Dawn Lowe, Doris McKee, Carole Mease, Lynn Stricker, Patty Wagner, and Evelyn Wilson.

**St. Mark's Episcopal Church
21 South Main Street
Lewistown, PA 17044**

