

Lent 2025

Create in Me a New Heart

How our lives and hearts are shaped
by vocation, scripture, and the call to
action in response to God's word.

Create in Me a New Heart

Lent 2025

About this Guide

Ash Wednesday begins the 40-day season of Lent: a time of self-examination and prayer in preparation for Easter.

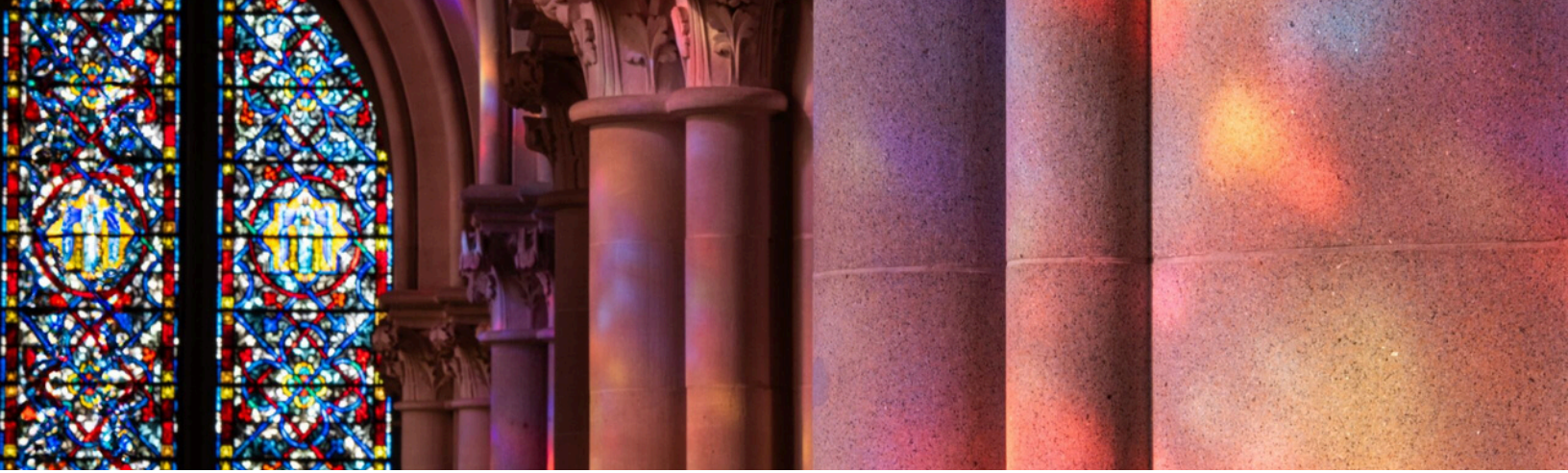
Lent historically began as a season when those hoping to be baptized at the Great Vigil of Easter gave themselves to profound fasting, prayer, study, and works of charity. Years of preparation were about to end at the font. The entire Church supported them and shared in their special devotion, so Lent became a time of renewal for everyone and a season of gratitude for the gift of baptismal rebirth.

All those millennia ago, no one else in the culture knew or cared, but the Christian community was consumed with preparation for baptism. Lent still knocks us out of step with the rest of the world and invites us to pause, look deeper, and be challenged by what we see. Above all, Lent encourages us to see that in baptism God has given us new life and made us members of Jesus' Body. Our gratitude for such a gift is matched by our regret that we have failed to embrace it fully. So, Lent is a paradoxical season of gratitude and repentance.

This booklet of weekly reflections has been prepared by the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, featuring the voices of our Cathedral clergy, Chapter, and our Diocesan Bishops. Wherever you are in your journey of faith, we hope these meditations invite you into this sacred season of reflection, repentance, and ultimately, renewal.

Join Us, In-Person or Online

You are also warmly invited to join us for worship at the Cathedral. We have opportunities to gather both in person and online; both on Sunday and throughout the week. Please visit our website for updates regarding the observance of the Lenten and Easter seasons at the Cathedral.



March 5, 2025

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

The Very Rev. Patrick Malloy, Dean

Ash Wednesday

When I was rector of a parish, I cared for people who had come to the end. Almost always they knew they were dying. Almost always it saddened them. Almost always they accepted it, but the people they loved often couldn't.

I would visit, and we would gather in a living room, or a bedroom, or a hospital room. Eventually, I would ask if the sick person and I could be alone. After everyone had left, the dying person would tell me how relieved they were to be alone with me. They needed to talk about what dying was like, and no one else would listen to them.

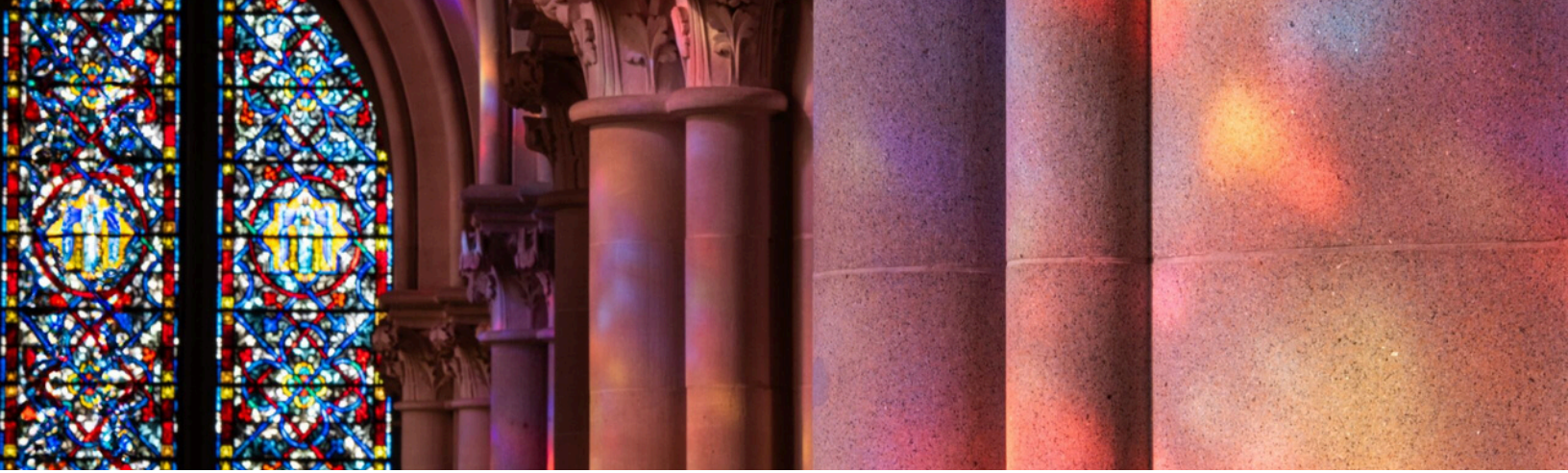
“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

That is what the minister says to each person. You might think a person would recoil, but they don't. It's a relief to get real with another person. We are all terminal.

I want to be surrounded by people being real with me as I die. Don't you?

But I also want them to assure me that Easter is real. I know it for certain now, but I may forget in the hour of my death. Death is real, and resurrection is real, and I need people to hold me as I move through both.

So, this Ash Wednesday we allow symbolic remains to be smeared on our faces, and we hear the sad news of our impending deaths, but in the background we also hear an echo of the sure and certain hope that echoes throughout our lives. That the dying Jesus is the glorified Christ and, as the author of 1 John says, what he already is, we also shall be.



March 9, 2025

Luke 4:1-13

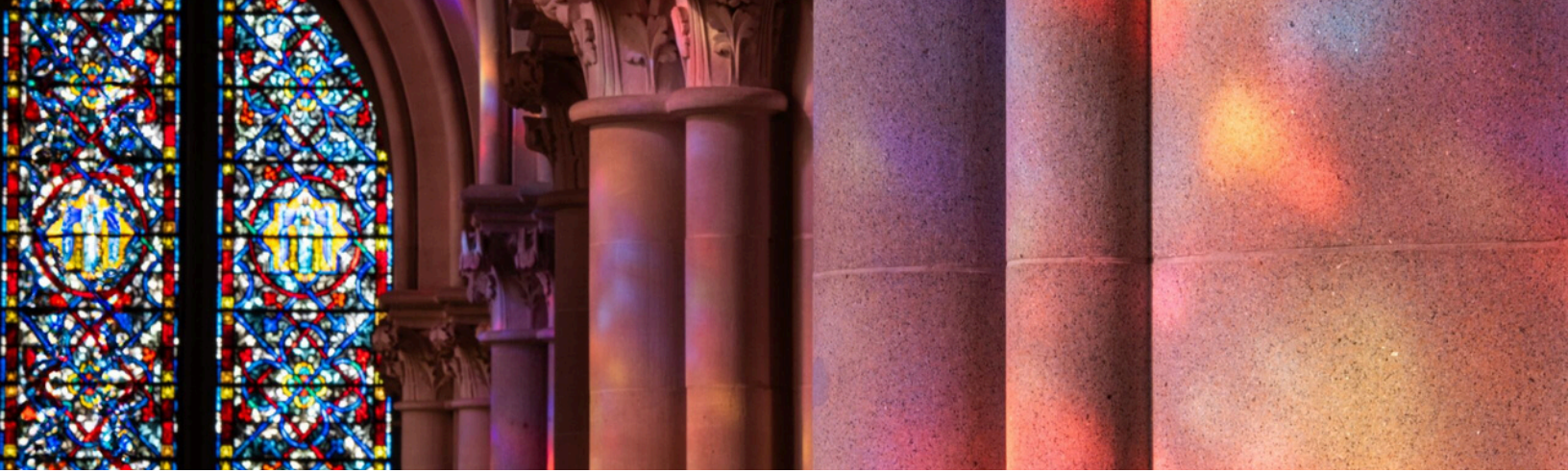
The Rev. Canon Steven Lee

The First Sunday in Lent

Lent is a season of transformation, a time when God calls us to examine our hearts and reorient our lives toward God. In Luke 4:1-13, Jesus enters the wilderness, led by the Spirit, and faces the devil's temptations. Each challenge tests his identity and mission, yet he responds with unwavering trust in God's word. Where Israel failed in the desert, Jesus remains faithful, showing us what it means to have a heart wholly devoted to God.

When people ask me, "Why should I go to church?" I remind them that the goal of worship is to bring us to a transformative encounter with Jesus Christ. In other words, worship is not simply an act of praise, but it is a particular orientation of the heart. What we worship shapes us. If we worship power, we become consumed by control. If we worship success, we are ruled by fear of failure. But when we worship the God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ, we are remade in God's image—our desires are reordered, our priorities realigned, and our hearts softened to love as he loves.

Lent invites us to return to this kind of worship. To have a new heart is to live as Jesus did—grounded in scripture, guided by the Spirit, and shaped by trust in God's love. Let us worship God alone, trusting that in the wilderness, God is making us new.



March 16, 2025

Genesis 15:1-12

The Rev. Canon Eva Suarez

The Second Sunday in Lent

Sometimes our scripture translations put a finger on the scale, resolving what our biblical texts leave somewhat ambiguous.

“And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness,” says the NRSV* of this stunning encounter between Abram and God. But the Hebrew in our source texts is a bit more muddled – “And he believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” All of a sudden, who thinks what about whom is a bit less clear.

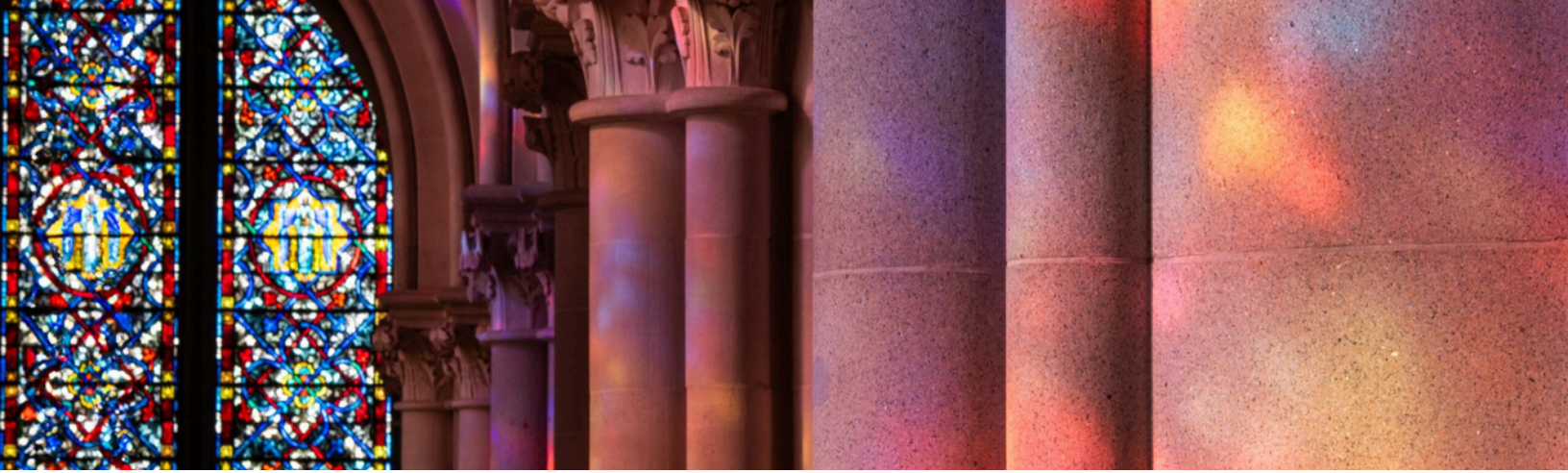
No less a theologian than St. Paul approved of the first interpretation, the one you’ll hear read aloud in church this week – that God credited Abram for his belief in God’s promises, and therefore considered Abram to be righteous.

But there’s just as much cause in the text for us to read it another way—that it is Abram who credits God, Abram who has called God to account, and is now building his understanding of God as righteous. Consider how this passage begins. God appears to Abram with good news, and Abram essentially replies, “I don’t believe you. Look at my life—what could be so good about it?” And in turn, God’s promises begin to change Abram’s mind—perhaps God does care about him after all.

While we might consider it improbable, even scandalous, that God has to prove his goodness and love to us, hear the words of Jesus this week, as Christ imagines himself as a mother hen whose chicks reject her loving presence.

A thing to ponder, this Lenten season—is it hard to believe that God loves you as much as church and scripture claim God does? How are you still coming to trust and believe in God’s promises?

*The New Revised Standard Translation of the Bible, or NRSV, is used in most Episcopal churches.



March 23, 2025

Luke 13:1-9

The Rev. Deacon Kenton J. Curtis

The Third Sunday in Lent

I once worked with a Rector who decided one Lent that the parish clergy should choose a favorite character from the passion and resurrection accounts in the Gospels. He then asked that we all perform a soliloquy as that character.

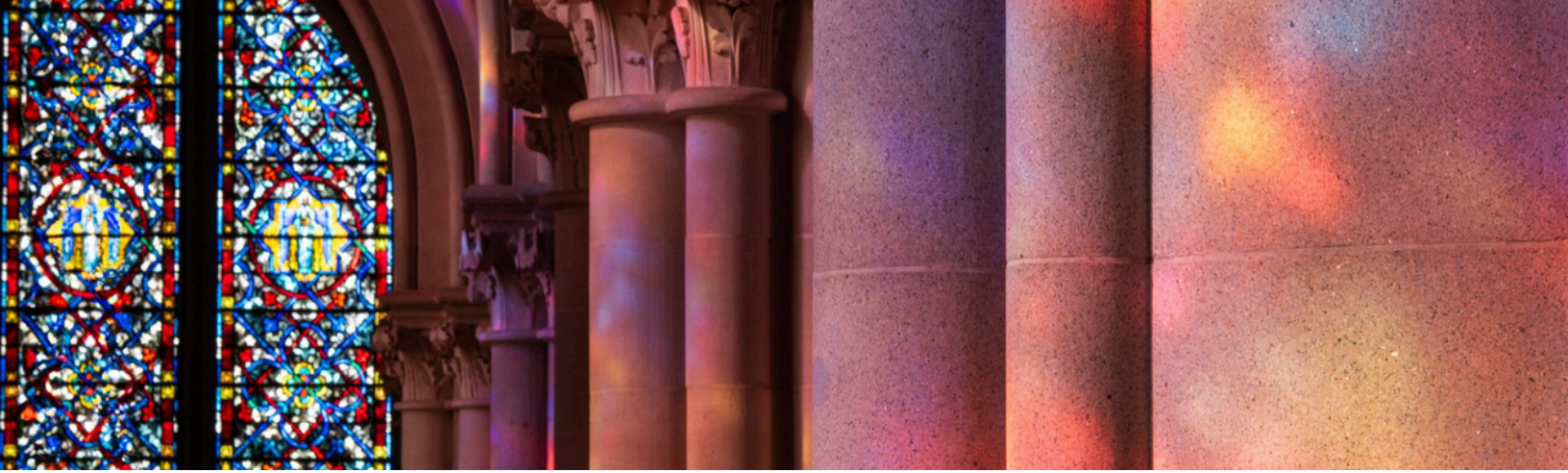
I immediately chose St. Thomas. He has always been personally so special to me and I rather suspect that is the case for many. Thomas gives us permission to do what we know we do. We doubt. There are all sorts of things about which we doubt. We are blessed with curious minds, and the ability for thinking critically, so of course, we doubt.

Curiosity and doubt propel science and sharpen the mind. They inspire art and music. Curiosity and doubt aid in our pursuit of truth.

Thomas was open and completely transparent with his doubt. He wanted to see the wounds in Jesus to believe. I actually believe the depth of Thomas's faith is seen in his doubt. Thomas wasn't a sceptic. He was a beloved follower of Jesus seeking proof of something he already hoped, and at his core knew to be true.

We can actually see ourselves in Thomas. We know the wounds were real, we know the end of the story. We know that after Good Friday comes Easter.

Luke's Gospel offers the parable of the fig tree, reminding us that we must tend to the soil of our hearts and minds. Nurture and feed the soil of our relationships with God and each other. Lent is that perfect opportunity to reflect on loving more in each and every relationship we have with another person. We are going to need each other now perhaps more than ever, and the love of Christ in each of us will ultimately help us to flourish and prevail.



March 30, 2025

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

The Rev. Canon Alissa Newton

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

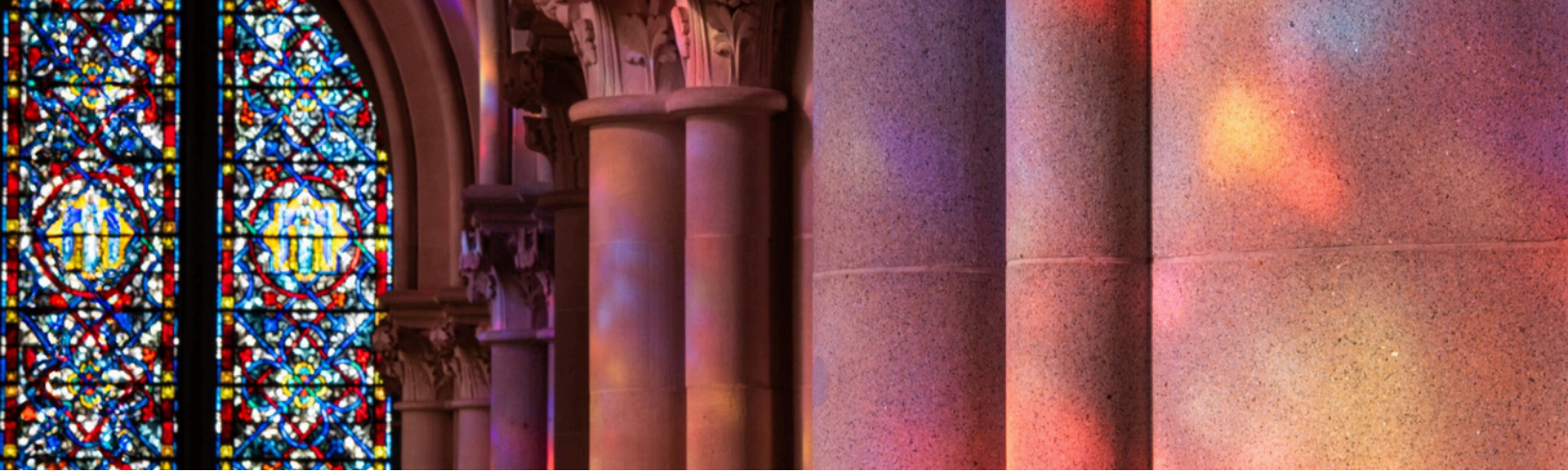
As a child I told my mother, in great detail, all the tales of woe in my life. Many of these monologues involved my stories of ways in which various friends had let me down. My mother always listened, always comforted, and always advocated for me to stay in relationship with my friends. “Maybe,” she would say, “you are just going to have to be the bigger person.”

I hated hearing that. I didn’t want to be the bigger person – the one who forgave first, who reached out first, or who practiced empathy first.

Now that I am a parent of teenagers I often find myself in the place of my mother, especially when my children are fighting with each other. I can see even more clearly than before how conflict cannot end if someone doesn’t choose to reconcile – to value the essential worth of the other person over the perceived or real harm they have done.

One of the basic tenants of Christian faith is that God is always the bigger person. We follow a God who never fails to reach out first, to perceive our belovedness before our brokenness, and to stand ready for relationship no matter what we have done to trespass on that relationship. Jesus is the primary incarnation of God’s relentless willingness to put love first and to join us where we are.

What if we accepted this reconciling love, and decided to live in it’s light? What if we took the grace and love God has given us and started there with the people who we struggle to love? This is the way toward healing. This is the way toward a world made new.



April 6, 2025

John 12:1-8

The Rev. Canon Eva Suarez

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

“You always have the poor with you.”

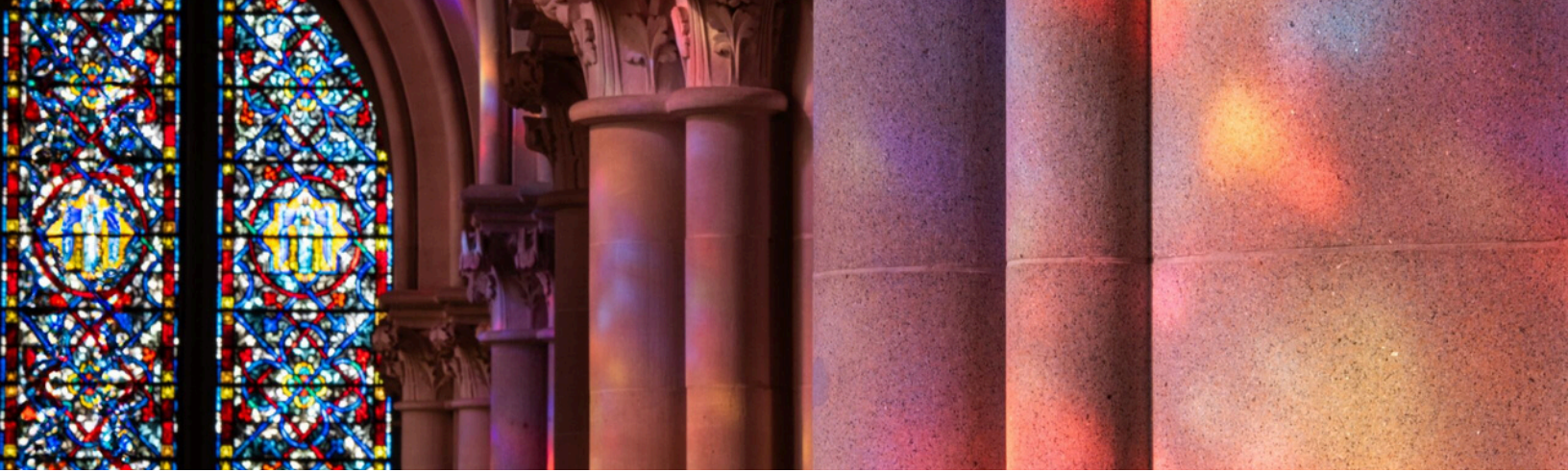
It is one of the most wrenching, the most confusing things that Jesus has to say to us.

Jesus knew his disciples would recognize their Torah, though we may not. “For there will never cease to be poor people in your land,” Moses taught the Israelites, illuminating how they were meant to live together. And as is so often the case when Jesus teaches from the scriptures, what is said implies what is left unsaid. “There shall be no needy among you,” Moses continued, since the Lord your God will bless you in the land, if only you heed him. No one is meant to be poor among God’s people. If the other disciples agree with Judas, that is fair—they have not mistaken the law.

Yet Mary of Bethany has done a good thing. “For there will never cease to be poor people in your land,” Moses taught, “which is why I command you: open your hand to them.” “You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me,” Jesus tells them, sitting among his friends the night before he would enter into Jerusalem, the night before there would be no turning back. For all that he has said and done, Jesus alone understands that death is close at hand.

Mary takes a pound of costly perfume, she who once chose the better part. She kneels at her Lord’s feet and opens her hand to one now so needy; she puts her body and her resources and her care to the neglected places so that their holiness might be declared.

The smell of nard would have lingered on Jesus’ body, it clings to the skin for days. And a few days from now the soldiers, too, would smell the rich perfume, when they stripped his clothes, and hung him from the tree.



April 13, 2025

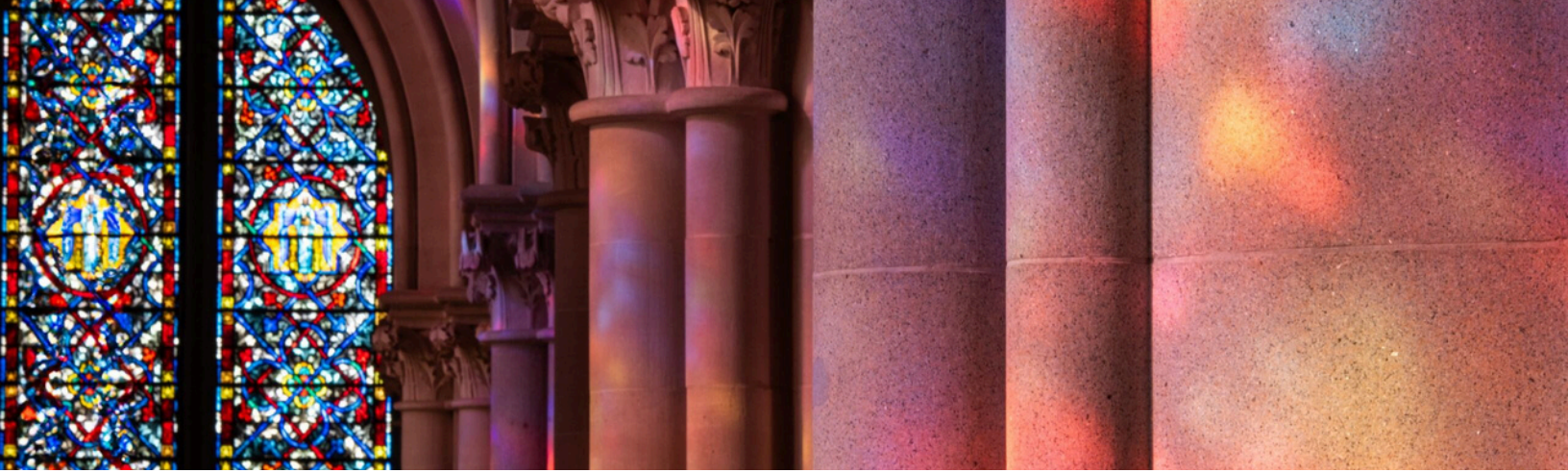
Luke 19:28-40

The Very Rev. Patrick Malloy, Dean

Palm Sunday

No one expects the Palm Sunday procession to be terribly orderly or solemn. Most years, the weather has finally taken an irreversible turn away from winter, and walking around the grounds waving palm branches makes people a bit giddy. It's liturgical fun. But then, just like that, things take a turn. Isaiah mourns because God's servant is struck on the face and tormented. The Psalmist's neighbors are plotting harm. Jesus' disciples sleep while he faces his mortality, Peter denies him, and the Lord dies on a cross.

The collision of joy and pain is jolting but it isn't unusual. Life is often like that. It is joy and pain flowing from one into the other and back again. A heart formed in Christian community is large enough to hold both joy and sorrow at once. When you walk through this striking juxtaposition year after year — literally walk through it — you learn not to cling too firmly to the good times or to run in a panic from the bad. We have walked the Way of the Cross before. We know where this road leads.



April 15, 2025

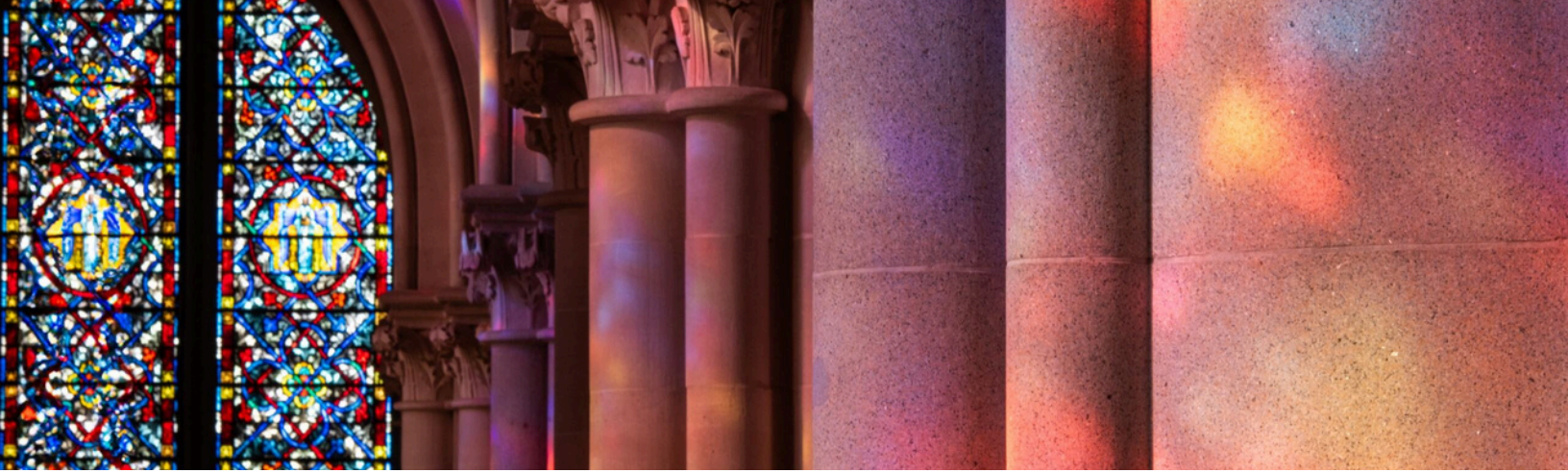
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

The Rev. Canon Masud Ibn Syedullah

Holy Tuesday

If one does not know the story of Jesus – the full story – the cross (and particularly a crucifix) would be quite baffling as a positive and strengthening symbol of faith. Yet, for many centuries it has been, and continues to be. How could a brutal image of death communicate something good? The cross has been called “a sign of contradiction.” Paul certainly speaks of it in that way. He says the message of the cross seems foolish to some – to those of the world who consider themselves to be wise; but in fact, for those whose lives are being transformed because of their trust in Christ it is a sign of the power of God. Of course, Paul’s perspective of the cross is a post-resurrection view. For him, Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection demonstrate God’s wisdom and power being radically different from limited human understanding.

Typically success is gauged by one’s power of control, domination, status, material wealth, and other conditions of might. However, God often works to accomplish God’s purpose through people who are considered common, of low social or economic status, weak and powerless. So Paul proclaims Jesus’ crucifixion as God’s opportunity to reveal a radically new understanding of God’s purpose and power to transform what is commonly considered hopeless into something vital. For Paul and the believers to whom he writes, they experience and are witnesses of new lives – lives of new hope, joy, community, and purpose through the Life-Giving, Life-Transforming power of God. Such transformation is available to us today as we follow the crucified, yet risen Christ.



April 17, 2025

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Canon Stephen W. Nicholas, M.D.

Maundy Thursday

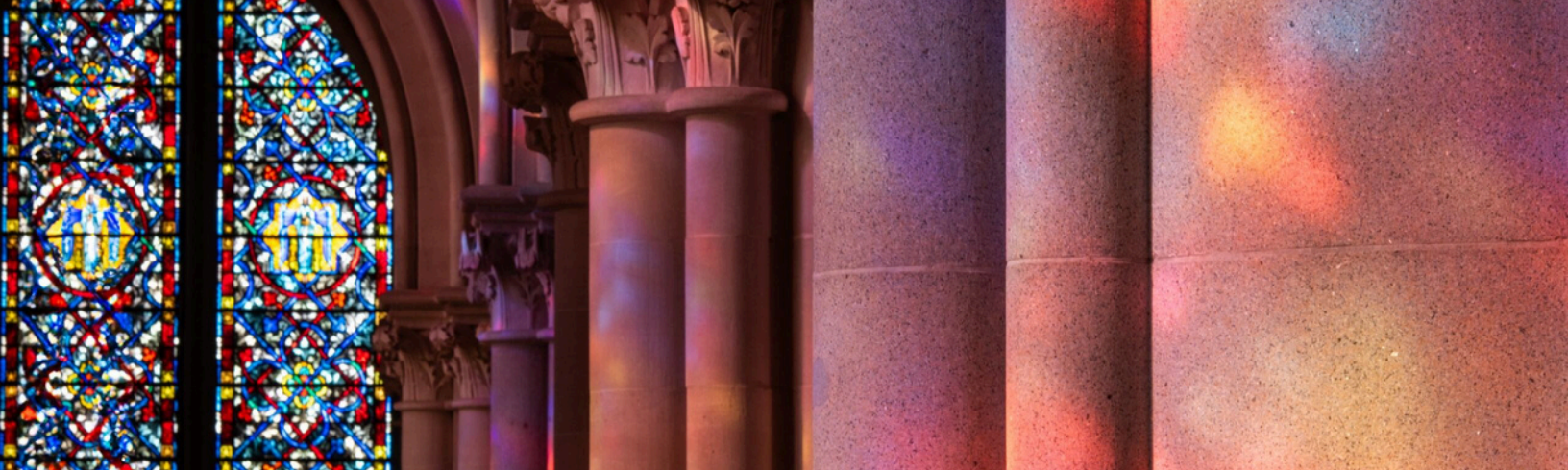
I was a pediatric intern working in an emergency room in northern Manhattan when, right in front of me, a small child threw up in the middle of the waiting room. Contagion of course was of concern, but the urgent priority was that someone would slip and fall. I called out to the clerk to call a janitor. But Juana, a triage nurse from the Dominican Republic, took action: she ran to the janitor's closet, filled a bucket with hot water and soap, set up two yellow safety signs, and began to mop up the mess.

Before medical school, I had worked many years as a part-time janitor. My father and grandfather were janitors. But now I was a doctor. I hadn't rushed to clean up the vomit. Did I now think I was too grand for this kind of lowly work? I felt guilty, and with some embarrassment offered to take over. But Juana gave me a smile and said, "Go back to saving lives. This isn't in your job description." And, of course, it wasn't in hers, either. This was an act of love.

Simon Peter didn't think the lowly act of washing feet was in Jesus's job description. "You will never wash my feet," he said. But Jesus insisted, and after he washed all the disciples' feet, Jesus said:

"Do you know what I have done to you?... I have set up an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."

On this Maundy Thursday, look around you. The action of Juana, the triage nurse, was not unique. We are surrounded by the manifestations of Jesus's commandment to love one another as He has loved us. There is abundant goodness in the world and multiple ways to serve others. Open your eyes, rejoice—and serve!



April 18, 2025

John 18:1-8

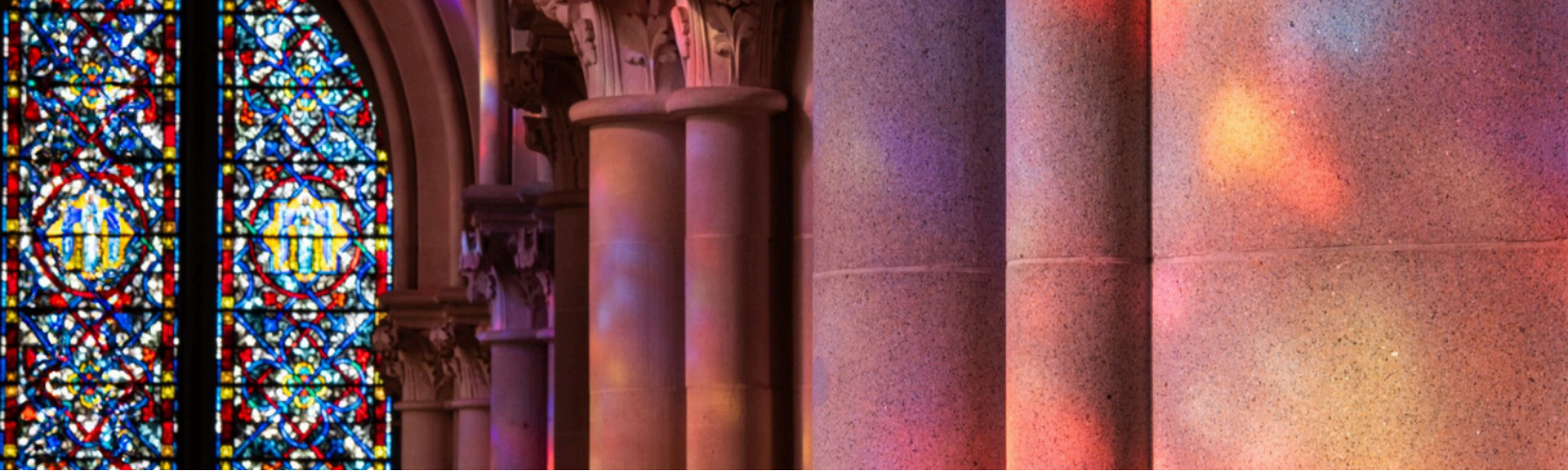
The Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool

Good Friday

I have a picture of Jesus standing in a garden with his disciples, waiting for Judas to arrive with a detachment of soldiers to arrest him. The soldiers, police, and Judas all apparently arrive at the same place, but it is Jesus who takes the initiative. Whom are you looking for? Jesus says. They answer, Jesus of Nazareth; and Jesus says, I am he - which is the English translation of the Greek ego eimi - which really means, simply yet profoundly, I am.

In reflecting on this picture, I realize that one of my most profound desires in life is to be able to stand up facing my greatest fears and say, I am. Yes. I am a woman, a Christian, a lesbian, a bishop, a friend, a lover, a partner, a human being. I am other things as well, and like every other human being, I am a child of God. This is who I am. I need you. And, dare I say it? You need me. We need each other. But sometimes I am afraid. I am afraid that if you really begin to see all my faults and warts - all the things that are a part of my being human; if you begin to realize the many times I've been mean, or judgmental, or even violent - that you will reject me. Maybe even greater than that is the fear that people who don't even know me will reject me because I fit into this or that category of people. I want to face this fear in me that can immobilize and bind me up and be able to say, in the same spirit of freedom that Jesus embodied, I am.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.



April 19, 2025

John 19:38-42

The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin

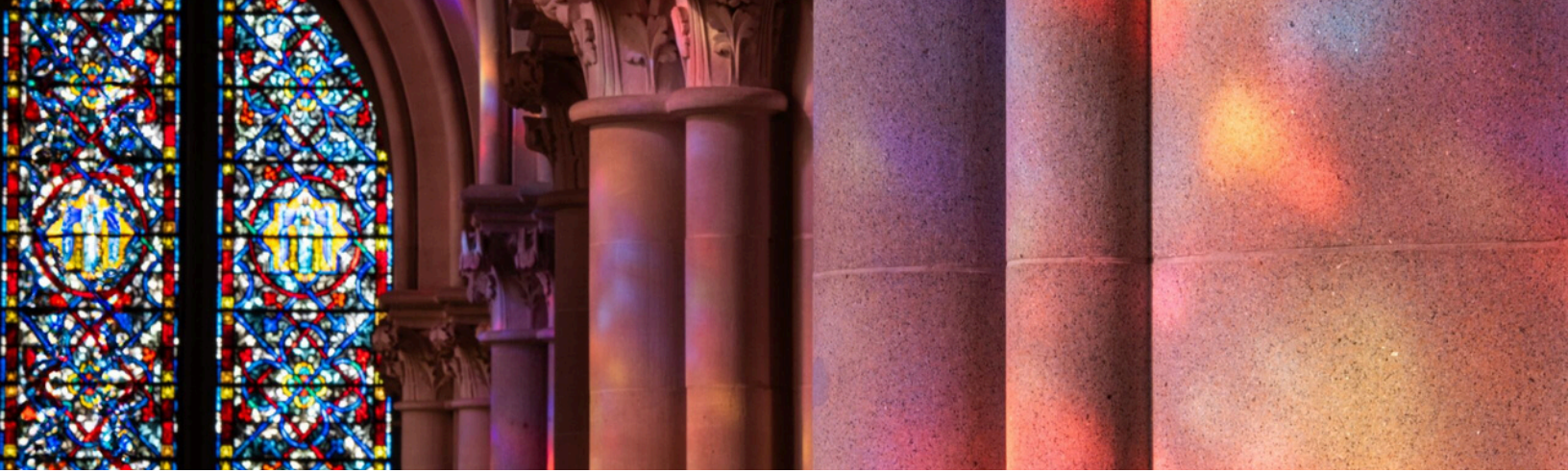
Holy Saturday

Burial of the dead is important in many cultures and religions, for it has to do with the dignity and the sanctity of body and bodily existence. The manner with which Joseph and Nicodemus cared for the body of Jesus after his indignant and cruel death is a witness not only to their love and respect for Jesus but also for the sacramental reality of Jesus' body and, thus, of all human bodies and bodily existences.

Burial of Jesus' body is an important detail in the Passion story because it attests to Jesus' full humanity. He died and was buried according to the burial custom of the Jews. The law had to be kept down to the last detail to be fulfilled in Jesus. Without the proper burial of Jesus' body after death, we have no Gospel as we know it.

Central to Christian theology of salvation is the bodily death and the bodily resurrection of Jesus and our bodily death and bodily resurrection with him. In the prayer of Thanksgiving over the Water of the baptismal rite, the presider says, "In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection" (BCP 306).

This points toward a baptismal life that is transformed and radically new here and now, in which we promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons and respect the dignity of every human being. Black and brown bodies are, thus, no less of the image of God than white bodies. LGBTQ+ bodies are no less of the image of God than straight and cisgender bodies. Where the body is not recognized as holy there can be no holiness of life.



April 20, 2025

John 20:1-18

The Rt. Rev. Matthew F. Heyd

Easter Day

I always expect something different. Each year the beautiful flowers, the soaring hymns, the bright sunshine of our Easter services suggest a day that is sparkling and spectacular.

But the Easter Gospel begins in the dark. It's a hard moment. The disciples have fled following Jesus' crucifixion. People are afraid. The women have come to remember and mourn. Their hearts are broken. Care represents an act of courage. Jesus' death was meant to serve as a warning—the story is over. Stay away.

We know there's more. That's why we gather on Easter mornings and proclaim Jesus' resurrection as the center point of our Christian faith through our whole lives. We believe in new life. It's joy.

That's not today's gospel, not yet. The opening darkness offers us a spiritual gift. The women and the first witnesses to the risen Christ struggle to understand what was happening. They were prepared for loss. They didn't expect the dawn, and it took a moment for them to adjust to new light.

Like those first witnesses, our own vision of what's possible is too often too small. Our broken hearts harden and close. Like those first witnesses, loss isn't the end of our story. God surprises us. The Gospel passage begins in the dark and calls us to look for the light within our own lives. Jesus is risen! We're given new life. Our hearts can be healed and made whole. Dawn has come once more. That's more than we can ask or imagine—and it's completely spectacular.

Happy Easter.