

An outward-facing Lent

BY JULIA SEYMOUR

LENT IS A TIME OF REFLECTION on Jesus' movement—down the mountain from the Transfiguration, through the last days of his ministry, up the hill of Golgotha. It is also a time when we can prepare for Easter joy by praying for others and their vocations. God grants all of us many vocations—paid and unpaid work, volunteering, family roles and citizenship expectations. Our fulfilling of these roles is part of how the Holy Spirit accomplishes God's will on earth as in heaven.

We end our Lenten series with these devotions for Holy Week and Easter Day:

DAY 35: HOLY MONDAY, MARCH 29

Music instructors and band directors take on the task of teaching music and music appreciation. Teaching music includes aspects of mathematics, biology and history. Community singing and playing instruments together can create space where, through the music, people begin to breathe in sync with one another, becoming more than the sum of the parts.

Holy God, all praise and honor is due to you. Let the songs of

our hearts, our mouths and our instruments give glory to you and to your powerful presence of love in the world. Amen.

DAY 36: HOLY TUESDAY, MARCH 30

Veterinarians and vet techs care for the nonhuman members of our families. They treat birds, cats, dogs, horses, fish, rabbits, ferrets and animals that we might not have even considered petting, much less bringing home. Not only do they care for our furry, feathered and scaled beloveds; people with this vocation also take on the task of relieving the suffering of our pets when it is time to let them go.

God of all creatures, bless those who care for animals, especially family pets. Give them joy and encouragement in all they do as stewards of this part of your creation. Amen.

DAY 37: HOLY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

From restaurants to houses, from bridges to food, inspectors ensure

that structures and resources are safe. Carrying long lists of regulations and a desire for people to safely flourish, inspectors fulfill their vocation with hope for the future. Just like our Creator, they anticipate the opportunity to look and say, "It is good."

Spirit of creation, we thank you for the work of inspectors. While we do not see their work, they fulfill their vocations with us in mind. Amen.

DAY 38: MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 1

Cosmetologists can do any of a variety of tasks—from cutting hair to nail services to makeup. Their touch may be the only human contact some of their clients receive. Their willingness to kneel down to wash another's feet or provide a makeover in a time of grief is a holy vocation that brings peace and consolation to those who receive their care.

Thank you, Jesus, for those who are willing to care for the bodies of others. This week, we are especially grateful for those who wash

and tend the hands and feet of others. Amen.

DAY 39: GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 2

It's easy to forget that everything we buy in a store has been touched by others we will never see. In particular, we tend to forget the people who made these items. Whether doing the work by hand or watching over a machine, people in factories all over the world produce our clothes, toys, cars, school supplies and nearly everything that is not food. All too often, to keep production costs low, these workers suffer low wages, forced overtime and

unsafe conditions.

We pray, dear God, for those who work in factories. We ask that they may have safe working conditions, fair pay and a sense of value in all they do. Amen.

DAY 40: HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 3

The vocation of storytelling is one of the oldest in the world. The one who tells a story is trying to make sense of the world. Stories, both fiction and nonfiction, help us think differently about ourselves, other people and the world beyond our imagination. This week, as we celebrate the

high point of the greatest story ever told, let us give thanks for all who have kept the story of God's faithfulness alive from generation to generation.

God of love, you are the author of the story of creation. Thank you for including us in your story. Thank you for all who have given their lives and energy to telling your story in the past, present and time to come. We await the time when our faith becomes sight and the story is fulfilled for all creation to see and believe. Amen.

EASTER DAY: SUNDAY, APRIL 4

The Easter story in the Gospel of Mark feels a little like an untouched coloring sheet. Here are the outlines of the story: Grieving women. The stone rolled away. A young man explaining that Jesus is risen. The empty tomb. The abruptness of Mark's version reveals the absence of color or longed-for details. The oldest versions of Mark end early, at 16:8, with the women saying nothing because they are afraid.

Easter takes on its technicolor hue, not as the women

hurry away from the tomb, but as the Holy Spirit helps them overcome their fear. Slowly, the women tell what they saw. Softly, pastel hues creep into the picture. The risen Jesus appears first to those who followed him, and then to others. Brighter, bolder shading fills in the page.

Think back to what Jesus promised and to the glory of God all around you. The fullness of the spectrum fills every inch of blank canvas in imaginations and hopeful souls. The truth of resurrection makes

bright what was dim. Easter illuminates the shadows of our fears and doubts.

Loving Creator, God of all things, grant us a new, perceptive joy in resurrection this Easter and every day. Increase our trust in you, so we may boldly live as the people you made and called us to be. Amen. 🌸