



PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

Facilitated by Racine Dominican Preaching Committee February 2024

A Matter of the Heart

By S. Carla Mae Streeter

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day. The short Ordinary Time that follows the Christmas mystery gives way to the season of repentance and reconciliation. The light turns on matters of the heart.

The writings of Catherine present us with an experience worth pondering. One day, in her prayer, Catherine asked Jesus a question: "Why, Lord, did you will that your heart be pierced when you were already dead?" The answer she received was indeed a matter of the heart. Jesus replied that no amount of physical suffering could express the depths of his love for her, so he willed that his heart be opened so that in her struggles she could always run there and take shelter. Catherine then wrote to Raymond: "Raymond, he told me his heart was like an open window without shutters, where I could always go and hide."

Lent, with its repentance and reconciliation needs to begin with matters of the heart. Unless we gaze on that intense love first, and hold our self-discipline up to that light, we are in danger of a distorted view of our weakness, sin, and need for repentance. Only up against that greater truth can we see ourselves correctly. Yes, we are sinful. Yes, we need to repent. Yes, we need to be reconciled with God and with others. But all this needs to be held up against how much we are loved. As we begin this Lenten time, we begin with matters of the heart. Our name is "Beloved."

Happy Valentine's Day...!

A place to 'run and hide?'
A 'window without shutters?'
Is that why your heart is open?
Have you made your heart open without a door?
Can we go there anytime
so we are not swallowed up
by our own sin or that of others?
Is that the Good News?
Amazing!



Thank you to Associate Linda Jackson for this month's reflections.

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time | February 4, 2024

Gospel Acclamation Matthew 8:17: Christ took away our infirmities and bore our diseases. **Job 7:1-4, 6-7:** "The night drags on; I shall not see happiness again." We sometimes feel as tormented as Job did, but Christ can relieve us of our misery if we let Him. **Mark 1:29-39:** "Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. [Jesus] grasped her hand. The fever left her and she waited on them."...He cured many who were sick, and he drove out many demons."

How do I allow Christ to take away my physical, emotional, and spiritual illnesses?

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time | February 11, 2024

Gospel Acclamation Luke 7:16: A great prophet has arisen in our midst, God has visited his people. **Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46:** "The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!'" **Mark 1:40-45:** Jesus cured the leper and said "tell no one anything."

What if you had a new fatal form of Covid and there was no known treatment? But a fearless holy person touched you and you were immediately cured! Wouldn't you tell everyone it was God, post it on Face Book, or even tell CNN News?

First Sunday of Lent | February 18, 2024

Gospel Acclamation Matthew 4:4b: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. **Genesis 9:8-15:** "never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood." **Mark 1:12-15:** After Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, he went to Galilee and proclaimed the Gospel.

Am I drowning in a flood, dying of thirst in the desert, or hoping God will turn rocks into bread for me? Or do I live on every word that comes from God?

Second Sunday of Lent | February 25, 2024

Gospel Acclamation Matthew 17:5: From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard: This is my beloved Son, listen to him. **Genesis 22:1-2, 9a,10-13, 15-18:** Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only beloved son, and he listened to God when he said don't put a hand on him. **Mark 9:2-10:** At the Transfiguration, God said, "This is my beloved son, listen to him."

Do I listen to God? Am I willing to sacrifice whatever is "my only beloved son" in order to do God's will?