

Lent 2023, Week 1 Reflection

CHOICES, BOUNDARIES, AND REDEMPTION

Welcome to the Lenten audio retreat, presented by Jesuit Connections, a program of Ignatian Young Adult Ministries. Each week, we'll provide a short audio reflection written by a different member of the Ignatian Young Adult Ministry community on a theme or liturgical reading from that week in Lent. We hope these clips will deepen our personal and collective preparation for Easter. To mark the first full week of Lent, then, let's pause for the next several minutes, take a deep breath, and return to the heart of the Lenten season as we contemplate "Choices, Boundaries, and Redemption." This week's reflection was written by Grace Caldara, a member of the 2021-2023 Contemplative Leaders in Action program in Boston...

...

Lent is a time to pause and reflect on both our inner spiritual life and our outward life. It is a time to reset and push ourselves to be uncomfortable, to learn and grow forward, to become a better version of ourselves. The readings for this week can be summed up in three words: choices, boundaries, and redemption. As I was reflecting on these readings I started to think about my own children. My youngest is a toddler, and as part of our job as parents my husband and I set boundaries for our child. As a toddler who is learning about the world and exploring, there are times she chooses to ignore us, trying to push back on and test the boundaries that we set out of love and safety. When those boundaries are crossed, we often allow natural consequences to occur, such as a short fall, a bad taste, or a stuck toy. As parents we want to keep our children safe, especially when they are small, vulnerable and don't have any clear understanding of gravity or temperature. As part of our love for them, we establish boundaries and give choices to guide them into fuller understanding, while giving them space to choose their own path. In our first reading this week, God does exactly that for Adam and Eve—he sets boundaries for his children. As the first people, Adam and Eve are given freedom to make their own choices. They individually and collectively have a choice about what path to take. Will they respect the boundary that has been set for them, or will they test it? They choose to test that boundary and meet the repercussions of that choice.



"Redemption? <2>" by [Giampaolo Macorig](#)
is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

As an adult, we set our own boundaries with other adults, whether these are our co-workers, our families, or our friends. When people choose to ignore those boundaries, we might have a

myriad of reactions, from simple annoyance to cutting off contact all together. The choices that we and others make will always have consequences, but the consequences of our choices don't always have to be negative. The consequences can also be those of redemption. In this week's readings, we see that Adam and Eve's choices perhaps negatively impact the path of humanity, but Jesus' choice to resist temptation in the desert leads to the salvation of humanity. In other words, the results of our choices can be mended if we are willing to be repentant and open to receive grace.

The words of the psalm for this week are a beautiful example of how to apologize for harm that we have caused others, and then work to mend those broken relationships. This applies not only to our prayerful conversations with God, but also to our human relationships, especially when we have crossed another's boundaries. The psalmist shows us how to be humble before those we have hurt, acknowledge the offense we have caused, and then offer to do better in the future so as to not repeat the offense. We are imperfect and, as the readings show, we are free to choose our own path. While we may experience negative consequences from the path we have chosen, we can correct our course by reconciling with ourselves, with others, and with God.

...

We look forward to spending our Lenten season together as we prepare intentionally for Easter. Thank you for joining us for this week's reflection, presented by Ignatian Young Adult Ministries, an initiative of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality. We hope this audio retreat stokes the fires of your daily contemplation. Join us next week when we'll ponder "Openness, Listening, and Responding to God's Call."

Reflection questions:

- *What "roadblocks" are you sitting at that may actually be boundaries?*
 - *God has shown us how to set boundaries with love and intention, what boundaries have you set? What boundaries do you need to set? What boundaries do you need to re-examine?*
 - *What relationships need mending due to boundaries you have crossed?*
-

Opening & Closing Prayers

To Bless the space Between Us by John O'Donoghue

*This is the time to be slow,
lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes
try, as best you can, not to let
the wire brush of doubt
scrape from your heart
all sense of yourself
and Your hesitant light.
If you remain generous,
time will come good;
And you will find your feet
again on fresh pastures of promise,
where the air will be kind
and blushed with beginning.*

The Merton Prayer by Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.