

Lent 2023, Week 6 Reflection

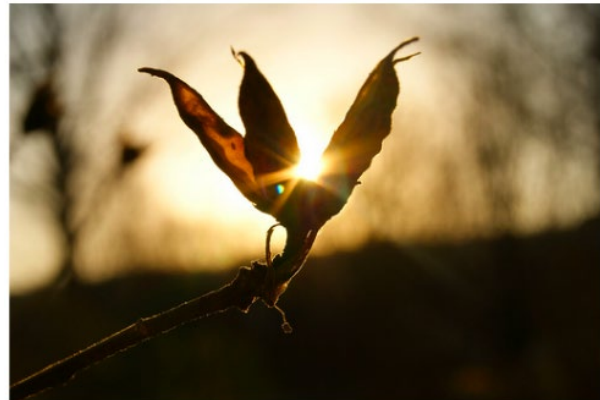
## OUR JOURNEY OF FAITH

Welcome to the Sixth (and final) Week of the Lenten audio retreat, presented by Ignatian Young Adult Ministries, an initiative of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality. Somehow, we have arrived at Holy Week. As we conclude our series and make final preparations for Easter, recall the beginning of your Lenten journey. Where were you on Ash Wednesday? What were you feeling that First Sunday in Lent? How have things shifted for you, for us? Take a moment to, in the words of Howard Thurman, "[center down](#)" as we turn our gaze, one last time, to this week's theme: "Our Journey of Faith." This reflection was written by Dominick Mastrodonato, a 2021-2023 member of the Contemplative Leaders in Action program in New York City...

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During Lent, we hear about Christ's temptation in the desert. We subsequently hear about his miracle of turning water into a delicious wine. Here lies proof that Jesus could have turned the desert's stones to bread when Satan taunted him. Faith in the Father determined Jesus' choice to reject Satan and wait for the right time.

This Sunday's opening reading from the Gospel of Matthew fulfills the prophecy that the responsorial psalm foretells of the Messiah riding into Jerusalem. I imagine that when the crowds responded that the man on the donkey was Jesus, a prophet of Nazareth, the apostles would have proudly looked at Jesus in awe. They still didn't fully know what Jesus would do, nor the extent to which their movement would go on to change the world, but they had begun to witness his miracles and had seen how he compassionately affirmed the humanity of people of all ages, backgrounds and classes in Judea. What we have witnessed in our lives, that which gives us joy, purpose, and the will to move forward, may form the basis of *our* faith. Contrary to Satan's temptation, testing God is not an act of faith. Doing the right thing is both an act of faith, and it sustains our faith.



["My journey's here, but my heart is there. So I dream and wait and keep the faith, while You prepare. ~ Chris Rice"](#)  
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In this way, Christian faith is multi-faceted. It is not merely passively waiting for Jesus to come again, to deliver or save us. It also flows from how we respond to Jesus' commands while we wait for him to enter his kingdom. Overall, faith in God deeply challenges us. It requires lots of humility, self-detachment, patience, trust and even what the Jesuits call indifference. It doesn't have to be perfect by some standards of Western, capitalistic thinking. Our efforts are to revere and glorify God, love and serve one another, care for our earthly home, acknowledge when we are in the wrong, and sincerely repent. These are things we are called to do every day. Faith can actually lose some of its virtue when we become overly attached to, for instance, our Lenten practices, and ruminate about how our faith and actions might not be perfect. Such ruminations may be expressions of self-image and self-importance. At the Last Supper, when Jesus tells the Twelve that their faith will be shaken, Peter protests, saying that *his* faith will not be shaken.

Pride like this can prevent us from living full lives. But the way we live out and reflect on our Lenten commitments to giving, fasting, and prayer can teach us where our hearts are and where God calls us to serve in the world, while at the same time helping us grow closer to God, and realize more fully what we do and don't need.

The large and small ways that we live each day express most fully our faith. We are not defined by our outbursts in times of difficulty. Even Jesus Christ, the Son of God and king of the universe, desperately cries out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" - an echo of today's responsorial psalm. To me, although this exemplifies Christ's humanity, it does not suggest that Jesus lacks faith in his father; Jesus has been consistent in his actions leading up to the cross. The pain in the events from the Agony in the Garden to Jesus' crucifixion break him and bring him to despair. Who am I to judge?

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi pairs doubt with faith, and despair with hope, respectively. Hope largely looks toward the future, while faith focuses on the present in order to prepare for the future. Doubt is not the only deterrent to faith. Despairing fears may also diametrically inhibit faith, and so can selfishness and vanity. In these forty days, Lent invites us to turn away from desolations and become aware of the present moment of our lives. As we turn to the coming Easter season, can we continue to pursue lives of joy and purpose while leaning, whenever we need to, on our faith?

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*We cannot thank you enough for journeying with us through Lent. We hope these reflections have been meaningful springboards for your own prayer and reflection. From all of us at Ignatian Young Adult Ministries, an initiative of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality, we wish you and yours a blessed Holy Week, Easter, and beyond.*

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### **Reflection questions:**

- How has this Lent been a part of our journey of faith? What has the season taught you about what faith is really about?
  - What tests and temptations have you undergone recently? How might you have possibly betrayed God, or stood steadfast in your faith?
  - How have you sought consolation with others? How have you worked to be a good person this season? How have you anticipated the wonders of the Paschal mystery?
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## Opening & Closing Prayers

### **Peace Prayer of St. Francis**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

### **“How the Light Comes” by Jan Richardson**

I cannot tell you  
how the light comes.  
What I know  
is that it is more ancient  
than imagining.  
That it travels  
across an astounding expanse  
to reach us.  
That it loves  
searching out  
what is hidden,  
what is lost,  
what is forgotten  
or in peril  
or in pain.  
That it has a fondness  
for the body,  
for finding its way  
toward flesh,  
for tracing the edges  
of form,  
for shining forth  
through the eye,

the hand,  
the heart.  
I cannot tell you  
how the light comes,  
but that it does.  
That it will.  
That it works its way  
into the deepest dark  
that enfolds you,  
though it may seem  
long ages in coming  
or arrive in a shape  
you did not foresee.  
And so  
may we this day  
turn ourselves toward it.  
May we lift our faces  
to let it find us.  
May we bend our bodies  
to follow the arc it makes.  
May we open  
and open more  
and open still  
to the blessed light  
that comes.