


The Conventual Church of
OUR LADY of the ANGELS
at the Franciscan Renewal Center



LENTEN
Reflections
2025



Franciscan Renewal Center
Peace. Renewal. Good.

LENTEN REFLECTION BOOKLET

INTRODUCTION

Lent is often seen as a time to give something up as a sacrifice. But it's also an opportunity to enhance our spiritual lives by taking up a practice that might not be a part of our daily ritual. Our lives are busy with activities and meetings and classes and commitments and, before we know it, we miss those quiet moments that are perfect for reflection.

Scriptural reflection offers a pathway to deeper connection with divine wisdom, fostering personal insight, guidance, and inspiration. Through reflection, we can uncover layers of meaning, relevance, and application in our lives. It strengthens faith, provides comfort in times of struggle, and empowers us to align our actions with God's will. Moreover, scriptural reflection cultivates a rich inner life, nurturing virtues such as patience, compassion, and humility. It serves as a foundation for ethical decision-making, fostering a life rooted in love, truth, and service to others.

With this Lenten Reflection Booklet, you are invited to look up the scripture reading for each day, then take a few moments to reflect on the personal writings of various members of our community as they offer their thoughts on what these scripture passages mean in their lives.

May your Lenten Season be blessed!

Sincerely,
The Lenten Reflections Editorial Team
The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025

THE LENTEN JOURNEY BEGINS

Today is Ash Wednesday. As a people of faith, we enter this Season, a time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These are the traditional pillars of Lent.

What might we learn about our faith, ourselves, and others as we move through Lent to the glory of Easter? How is it we live as an Easter people filled with Hope? This Jubilee Year of Hope invites us to remember “Hope does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5).

The prophet Joel (2: 12-18) challenges us to examine our relationship with the Lord and one another. For what do we Hope?

- Do we hope to draw closer to the Lord with our whole hearts?
- Do we hope the Lord is gracious and merciful to us?
- Do we hope He is slow to anger and rich in kindness?
- Do we hope He will forgive us for our shortcomings and give us His blessing?
- Do we hope we gather in respect for ourselves and each other?
- Do we hope the Lord will take pity on us His people?

Our Lenten journey need not be filled with dread, anxiety, doubt, fear and uncertainty.

For us on a pilgrimage, we can reignite our love for God and one another.

We can move toward Eater with Hope because we are an Easter people.

Contributed by

Fr. Page Polk, OFM

Rector

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025
PSALM 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6

“Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.” The responsorial Psalm today struck me deeply as I journey through the Jubilee Year of Hope.

When I was studying to become a priest, the odds were stacked against me. At that time, I had not completed high school, and my English skills were almost nonexistent. No one believed I could succeed—not even my Franciscan brothers. But I placed my hope in the Lord. I trusted in Him, and at the same time, I worked diligently to overcome my challenges.

Today, I stand as a priest, serving the English-speaking community—something that once seemed impossible. This journey has taught me that hope in the Lord is never in vain. The responsorial Psalm today reminds me, “Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.” Hope is not passive; it is an active trust in God’s plan while doing my part to move forward.

True hope does not mean ignoring difficulties or expecting miracles without effort. It means believing that with God’s grace and our perseverance, even the most daunting obstacles can be overcome. My life is a testament to this truth. When I put my hope in the Lord, I find the strength to achieve what once seemed unreachable. I have always believed that through hope, God makes the impossible possible.

On my journey of faith, I always cling to this hope, knowing that God’s plans for me are greater than my fears and limitations.

Contributed by

Fr. Vincent Nguyen, OFM

Vicar, The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels
The Franciscan Renewal Center



**BLESSED ARE THEY
WHO HOPE IN THE LORD**

PS 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

MATTHEW 9:14-15

Fasting has always been a big part of Lent for me, but does it really make a difference? The answer is—Yes! Not only does today’s Gospel make it clear that Jesus expects us to fast, but Isaiah reminds us that fasting is not just about personal sacrifice—it is about justice, mercy, and love in action. Isaiah challenges us to pray and fast with the intention of loosening the bonds of injustice, feeding the hungry, and sheltering the homeless.

This challenges me. For example, if I cannot be at the border to help ease migrants’ suffering—travel exhaustion, separation anxiety, deportation agony—can my prayers and fasting make a difference? They can if I fast in a way that makes space for others and if I use my sacrifices to love more. Jesus tells us that through prayer and fasting, God can accomplish the seemingly impossible (Matthew 17:20-21).

The Jubilee Year of Hope encourages me to see fasting not as deprivation but as an act of trust in God and generosity toward others. Hope is not just about waiting for a better future; it is about building it. I believe in God’s promise of renewal and fasting frees me to serve, to give, and to love more deeply. In opening my heart, I trust that God will fill it with His presence and grace, leading me to greater compassion and joy.

Through these acts, I can participate in God’s work of renewal, making His love visible in the world.

Contributed by

Brother Matt Ryan, OFM

Deacon, The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels

The Franciscan Renewal Center



SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

ISAIAH 58:9b-14

Each Lent, I find myself drawn into the tension between personal transformation and the world's deep, aching need for healing. Isaiah's words remind me that fasting is not just about personal sacrifice but about justice—removing oppression, feeding the hungry, healing wounds. It is about becoming a “repairer of the breach.”

I look around and see breaches everywhere—division in communities, distrust among neighbors, families fractured by pain and misunderstanding. The world feels parched, longing for restoration. And yet, Isaiah speaks of a promise: if we turn from selfishness and malice, if we feed the hungry and lift the afflicted, then light will rise in the darkness, and we will be like a “spring whose water never fails.”

Lent is my invitation to be that spring. To look beyond my own struggles and participate in God's work of renewal. But that requires surrender—honoring the Sabbath, trusting that my own pursuits are not the center of the world, making space for God's way instead of my own. It means fasting not just from food, but from selfishness, from impatience, from indifference.

This Lent, I pray to be a restorer of what is broken, to meet suffering with mercy, to honor God not just with my lips, but with my life. If I do this, I trust His promise: that in giving, I will be renewed. In serving, I will be strengthened. And in surrendering, I will rise.

Contributed by

Christopher Meyer

Development Director

The Franciscan Renewal Center



MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025
MATTHEW 25:31-46

What challenge does this Gospel offer to me personally regarding the Lenten disciplines of Prayer, Fasting and Service?

Prayer: The repetition of “I am the LORD” requires constant awareness of God’s presence in daily decisions and interactions. This challenges me to move beyond scheduled prayer times in church to maintain awareness of God’s holiness throughout my day.

Fasting: Beyond abstaining from food, the text demands fasting from destructive behaviors: slander, dishonesty, partiality, and grudges. I must examine where I withhold what rightfully belongs to others - whether material goods, fair treatment, or respect.

Service: The commands are concrete - protect the vulnerable, pay workers promptly, stand up against injustice, and love neighbors actively. This pushes me beyond comfortable charity to address situations where I typically remain passive or silent.

The Gospel demands examination of how I treat others and requires specific changes in my behavior toward them. My Lenten discipline must focus on concrete actions of justice and charity, not just spiritual exercises.

Contributed by

Sue Force

Community Member

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels

whatever you did
for the least of these
sisters and brothers of mine,
YOU DID FOR ME



TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025

MATTHEW 6:7-15

As a Catholic school child, I served as an altar boy during Mass when it was still conducted in Latin.

At the time, my focus was on memorizing the Lord's Prayer rather than understanding its meaning: perhaps it could be due to the strictness of my nun teachers. Reflecting on it now, I see the prayer as a profound expression of hope, trusting in God's care and provision. It assures me that my needs will be met, and that God will guide me through life's challenges. The prayer emphasizes God's goodness and power to bring positive change, both in my life and in the world around me. It also reminds me that I have a loving Father who is always present, caring for me and guiding me.

Key phrases like "Our Father in heaven" and "give us this day our daily bread" for me, foster trust in God's sovereignty and provision, especially during times of uncertainty. Practicing the prayer during Lent, through fasting and service, deepens my connection to its message.

"Give us this day our daily bread" reflects my commitment to self-denial and intentional acts of service, reinforcing that God will provide for my essential needs and the needs of others. This focus on God's kingdom and redemptive plan gives me comfort and stability.

Reflecting on the Lord's Prayer has strengthened my anticipation of God's love and justice and has given me a renewed perspective on hope.

Contributed by

Rick Rusch

Casa Franciscana Outreach Board Member

The Franciscan Renewal Center



THE LORD'S
PRAYER

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025

LUKE 11:29-32

The crowds gathered in excitement to hear Jesus speak, and the first words Jesus gives them is this: “This generation is an evil generation...”.

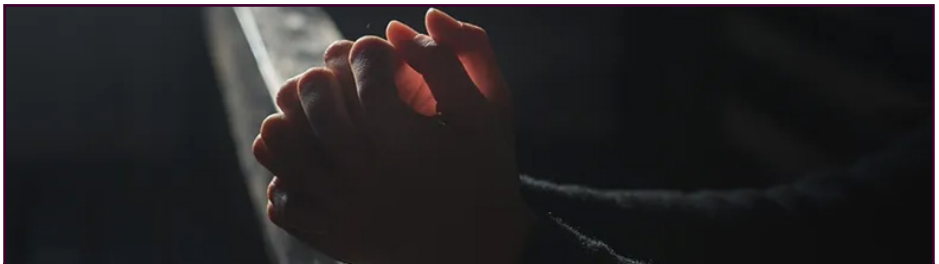
Ouch. Those words to me are like a gut punch. Jesus is not only speaking to contemporaries of his time: he is also speaking to me! How am I ever to be redeemed for the transgressions I’ve made? Then, I remember Jonah’s prophetic journey through Nineveh. Nineveh is an Assyrian metropolis that did horrible things to their enemies and displayed these acts proudly throughout the city. Jonah said to the people, “Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed”. No backflips, no song and dance, just simple words. What did Nineveh do? They proclaimed a city-wide fast! Even the king fasted and covered himself in sackcloth, among others. What did God do afterwards? He spared them.

Jesus then says, “At the judgement the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it...” I think back to a few thousand years ago when Nineveh was in its prime and they received Jonah’s message. What drove them to adopt these immediate, drastic actions? This Jubilee of Hope, I challenge myself to lean more into fasting and prayer as avenues of gratitude to God so that God can create in me a clean heart. Lord, give me eyes to see the good works you have already done for creation, the grace to be renewed in spirit, and the heart to experience your endless mercy.

Contributed by

Victor Jaimes

Co-Manager of Faith in Action Ministry, Department of Faith Formation
The Franciscan Renewal Center



THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

MATTHEW 7:7-12

When I read this gospel, I see a lot of my life in it. I spent a long time asking God for things. I asked him to take my physical and mental illnesses away from me and to do what the bible often told stories about, heal me. And when I thought I wasn't given anything and felt like all the doors were shut in my face and no matter how hard I sought I couldn't find anything good, I turned away from God.

Over time though, I began to grasp the realization that God may not give me what I ask for when I ask for it but will always give me what I need at the right time. There were probably some days when I thought I was asking for a loaf of bread but really asking for something that would end up being a stone.

What I learn from this gospel, even when it's hard, is to keep faith that God will take care of me as long as I take care of others. Even if it doesn't seem like he is. I will always try to keep the hope alive that, whenever I am in a time of need, God will have my back.

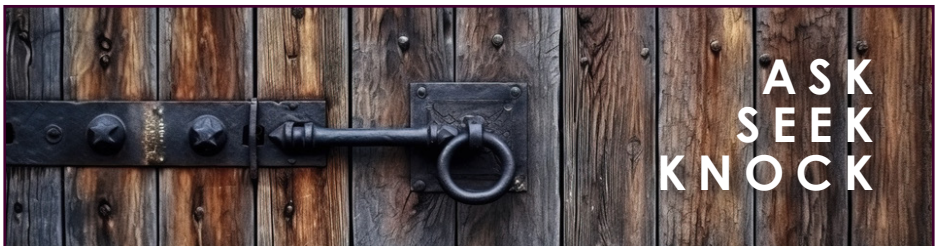
Because, since we live in a time when visible miracles are not as commonplace like the stories we learn about, keeping hope and faith is what we should always hold onto.

Contributed by

Jillian Kinzie

Community Member

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2024

MATTHEW 5:20-26

Reflecting upon Matthew's Gospel and this year's Jubilee of Hope, I'm immediately drawn to the relationship between anger, reconciliation and hope. I hear the immediacy that Jesus preaches. Quickly reconcile with your brother. For if you don't, holding on to this anger and reacting in anger is just as bad as murder. I'm struck by the severity of the consequences.

I'm reminded of a time when I had a falling out with a friend. Our close friendship ended abruptly. I was mad and I thought about it all the time. I let this anger take up a lot of space in my heart. I focused on the past instead of looking forward to the future. I had placed my hope in a friendship that had failed. I lost hope.

How did I switch from being angry and focusing on the past? I reconciled, or tried, I called, I apologized. It didn't ultimately change anything with our friendship – that was beyond repair. But my heart was transformed. I could let go of the heavy weight and burden of the anger I was carrying around. I switched my perspective to focus on the future. I could then look forward with hope. Hope in God alone. My future may look different than I anticipated, but with God all things are possible.

Today's Gospel invites me to respond by quickly reconciling any anger. Jesus calls us to immediacy – go quickly! Reconcile now before you do anything else! For otherwise we will pay to the last penny with our time, our heart, and any stolen moments of hope. Hope for the future belongs to those who are free to look forward instead of constantly looking back.

Contributed by

Christa Scott

Community Member

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



FIRST GO
AND
BE RECONCILED

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2024

MATTHEW 5:43-48

What a challenge put before us in these words of Jesus! Here is our “job description” as disciples. Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors. My enemies? Those who have hurt me? Those whom I dislike? How am I supposed to do this? I realize that I don’t have an answer!

My default response has always been to love my enemies, but only when I consider them as “a child of God.” This is the easy way out because I am looking only at that which I want to see while ignoring the parts I do not like or want to look at.

While contemplating what Jesus is asking, I realize that in order to truly love anyone, including and especially my enemies, I need to first take an honest look at myself. Are there people I need to forgive or ask forgiveness from? Does my ego and pride get in the way of loving those who hurt or offend me?

By looking within myself, I experience the total and unconditional love of God. This is the love that is forgiving and merciful, the love and forgiveness we are called to share with others. With the grace of the sacraments and the courage of the Holy Spirit, I can work on loving all peoples, including my enemies, in the way God loves me.

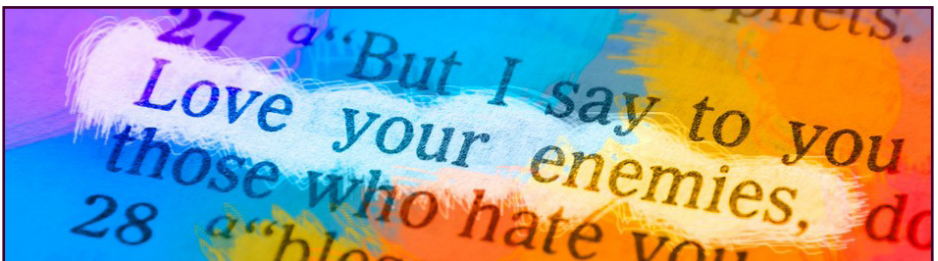
During this season of Hope the word “Love” takes on a deeper meaning. Love is an action word that leads us to the wellspring of hope. Are we ready to take action?

Contributed by

Patty Tafolla

Community Member, former Director of Catechetical Ministries

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025

LUKE 6:36-38

Listening to the words of today's Gospel, I cannot help but think about the lesson I learned in elementary school: treat others as you would like to be treated. This statement became a philosophy that I lived by, and although it isn't a bad philosophy, I can now see after starting my faith journey that it is lacking.

I treated others well as a child because it was easy to do, but as I got older, I became cold towards others. Although I did not go out of my way to treat others poorly, I also did not make any effort to continue to be kind to those who wronged me.

A few months ago, I started the OCIA process and learned how Jesus loved and healed Saul (later to be named Paul) before Saul showed any sign of repentance. That was when I realized that my dearly held philosophy was lacking.

God forgave, healed, loved and gave me blessings when I was the worst version of myself and even close to proclaiming myself an atheist. God didn't treat me as I treated Him. I was just loved unconditionally without a demand for anything in return.

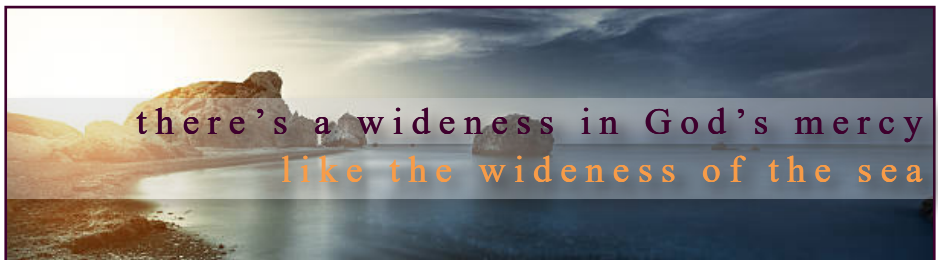
Today's Gospel invites me to pray for more understanding and compassion for others, to try to see God in all people. I HOPE and pray that I stop treating others as humans do and always treat others as God treats us! As Jesus says, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Contributed by

Brian Banuelos

OCIA Full Communion Candidate

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025
MATTHEW 23:1-12

An amazing aspect about Our Lady of the Angels Faith Community (OLA), and one I love, is how we attract non-Catholics, lost Catholics, non-practicing churchgoers of all faiths and spiritual seekers. In my six years as a neophyte Catholic and member of OLA, I've seen and heard this over and over many times.

This fact is a source of light and energy for me and has had a major impact on my faith journey. While many faith communities are not growing, and in fact are shrinking, OLA is sustaining, feeding members and attracting new seekers. Some are curious about what is happening on our intriguing-looking campus as they drive by on Lincoln. Others hear about us through word of mouth and recommendation.

Clearly, we are not “doing the Catholic things” just to “be seen,” and this is what I love! It is without bragging to say that I am so proud to be a member of this faith community, and I invite as many others as I can to also be a part of it. Whether it is through our dedicated and professional leadership or our engaged and welcoming worshipers in the pews, OLA is a place and people of energy, beautiful worship, exaltation and humility.

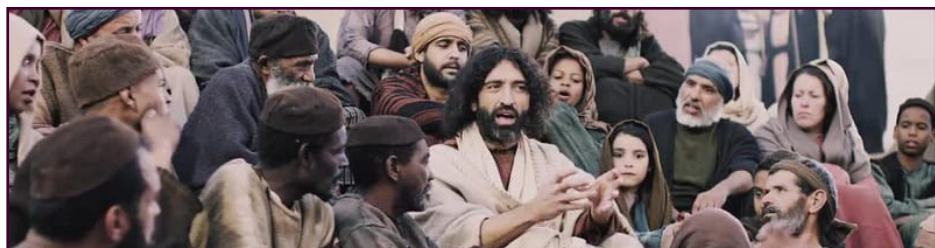
Here I have but one Master, the Christ, and it fills me with HOPE!

Contributed by

Christine Craft

OCIA Team & TAU Society Member

Our Lady of the Angels Church & The Franciscan Renewal Center



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025

LUKE 2:41-51a

Upon first read of this Gospel, it seems like the story of a typical 12-year-old boy who goes off from his family to explore and eventually gets lost. However, on deeper reflection, I realize that Jesus is not lost at all in the story.

Even as a boy, according to Luke, Jesus knew where he needed to be and thus ended up at his Father's house (Our Father's house). In this sense, Mary and Joseph are the lost ones because they are separated from Jesus.

This is me (and I'm guessing you too)! When I allow myself to be separated from Jesus, I feel lost. Whenever I try to tackle a difficult issue on my own without Jesus (i.e. without a spiritual center), it usually does not go well. However, when I turn to Jesus (i.e. open myself up to a greater Knowing), things seem to work out well.

To me, this Gospel is not about a lost Jesus; it's about a lost us (separation from Jesus) and about how much of a relief it is to be with him in His Father's House!

Contributed by

Steve Olea

OCIA Team Member and Hospitality Ministry

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025

LUKE 16:19-31

As Jesus tells it, there are two main characters in this story—a rich man, who lives a posh life and ate well every day, and a poor man, Lazarus, who is hungry, covered in sores and who lives outside the wealthy man's door. In sharing this story, Jesus intentionally flips the script and gives dignity to the poor beggar by naming him and leaves the wealthy man unknown, unnamed, anonymous. In his anonymity, he can be any one of us.

For me the core of the story is not about wealth or poverty, heaven or hell and the great chasm between, but inaction and indifference. One who has gifts and blessings does not prioritize loving God and serving others. He does not heed the prophets and scripture, and he does not act because, although he walks over him every day, Lazarus is not his problem.

I believe that hope lies in what we have been given: scripture, teachers, and the prophets who continually call us back to be in right relationship with God, our neighbors, creation, and ourselves. I hear repeated messages of love, solidarity, mercy, and justice; especially for the vulnerable.

This parable that Luke offers us is a sobering, challenging gift. I wonder: who is my Lazarus? Instead of missing opportunities and tripping over the Lazarus on my doorstep, I want to make choices to practice empathy, be present, and outwardly love God. And I ask for God's grace in how I love my neighbor as myself.

Contributed by

Laura Libertore

Co-Manager, Faith in Action Ministries

The Franciscan Renewal Center



FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2025

MATTHEW 21:33-43, 45-46

When I reflect on today's Gospel reading, a few questions come to mind. Do I really think of Jesus as the cornerstone or foundation of my life? How might I live differently if I made Jesus my cornerstone?

Each morning, I read the daily readings, reflect on them, and try to think of how I might apply them in my life. But sometimes, I find that at the end of the day I have not thought of the readings again or applied them to my life that day. This Gospel reading challenges me to think of Jesus as my cornerstone and to stop and reflect throughout the day and ask myself, "Are my thoughts, words, and actions aligned with the life of Jesus and his Gospel message? What do I need to add to my life to build upon this firm foundation, and what do I need to cut out of my life that does not affirm life and engender hope, peace, and joy?"

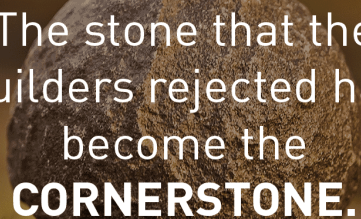
As I journey through Lent this year, I will make a concerted effort to make Jesus the cornerstone of my life. If I build my life on this strong and sure foundation, and not the shifting sands of public opinion or popular culture, then I can live in hope no matter how difficult the times may become.

Contributed by

David Gerkin

Community member, Hunger Action Ministry

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



The stone that the
builders rejected has
become the
CORNERSTONE.

MATTHEW 21:42

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025

LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32

This Lent, I feel like the other brother out in the field angry at the Father and resentful of his brother. Lately, I am often angry at both personal situations such as a close friend dying of cancer and also global ecological devastation such as the loss of homes and lives in the California fires. And if I am honest, I am angry with God that it does not seem to get any better. I wonder if anyone else is feeling this way? Still, I know that anger puts up a wall around me which inhibits my ability to experience joy and hope. Because of the brother's anger, he refused to go to the party, to experience a joyful reunion and to experience God's grace in his life.

Pope Francis' Jubilee year based on Hope comes at a perfect time. Hope is not blind optimism. Rather, hope expects things beyond human estimation. It rests upon the greatest foundation of boundless goodness, God. St. Anthony of Padua stated "Hope is the footprint whereby we walk to the Lord. Hope is the expectation of good things yet to come".

In addition, St. Francis helps us understand joy. Franciscan "perfect joy" is to show love, have compassion, and offer forgiveness in the worst situations especially when things are going terribly for us. Thus, this Lent I am focusing on finding joy and hope amid my life's circumstance so that I don't miss out on God's goodness surrounding me.

Contributed by

Patti Sills-Trausch

Mission Integration/Special Projects, Care for Creation Ministry

The Franciscan Renewal Center



MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025

LUKE 4:24-30

As I think about this reading and consider the Jubilee Year of Hope, I wonder what Jesus was hoping for as He allowed Himself to be led up the hill toward the cliff. And what is it that I hope for when I allow others to lead me someplace I may not want to be.

I wonder if He spoke to the people, friends and neighbors really, as they drove Him up the hill?. What would He have said? Was there shouting and yelling as one might expect from a “mob”? Was there weeping? Were the people trying to get Jesus to recant and capitulate to their will? Was Jesus calm and silent? Or did he try to break open their hearts and their ears and their eyes so they would stop, reverse course, and be saved?

What this reading says to me is that Jesus wanted His people to know that He came for ALL peoples, but He understood that not all, especially not those with whom He grew up, would hear His words or experience His great miracles. I am grateful and overjoyed that I am among those listening to His words and teaching of His words and deeds to others. I am hopeful that when I stand before Him in His kingdom that I will be counted among those, like Naaman of Syria and the widow in the land of Sidon, who has gladly received His gifts and will be received as a good and faithful servant.

Contributed by

Hannah Huryk

Director for Children’s Liturgy of the Word

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

LUKE 1:26-38

Mary, the first disciple of Jesus, was just a young girl when the angel Gabriel visited her—a teenager. However, she was very different from the teenage girls we know today. At 14 or 15, Mary was already considered a woman, betrothed to a man, and prepared to begin her life as a dutiful Jewish wife. She understood the path God had set for her and was focused in that direction. Then came the curveball: pregnancy outside of marriage, with a child whose paternity she couldn't explain, in a country where women faced death for such indiscretion. In one night, her life transformed from a certain, traditional future to one potentially filled with uncertainty, shame, and danger.

Mary faced this challenge with barely a moment's hesitation, asking only one question: "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" To me, this question reveals something important: Mary's response is not one of doubt or lack of faith! Instead, her question stems from logistics and curiosity. Gabriel offers her the answer she needs: "Nothing will be impossible for God."

This Lenten season and beyond, I know I can always seek comfort, guidance, and relatability from Mary, especially when life takes an unexpected turn. But it also prompts me to ask myself: do I trust that nothing is impossible for God? Do I have hope and faith that God will use me and my life for His glory and in service to others? Do I trust that God will never lead me into harm's way, no matter how uncertain the road ahead may be?

Contributed by

Donna Kinze

Family Minister

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

MATTHEW 5:17-19

This gospel speaks to the foundation of my faith, something solid and unchanging. In a world where it often feels like the ground beneath us crumbles, my faith keeps me grounded. The Gospel reminds us that while the earth may pass away, these laws remain steadfast.

Lent has always been a time of deep significance for me. As a child, it was an outward expression of my faith, and now, as a parent, I continue that focus while helping my daughter live her faith. For me, Lent has never been about giving something up, but about becoming more aware of the world around me and how I can improve it. A simple smile to a stranger can be an expression of God's love.

I remember one of my first business trips when my flight was delayed for hours due to fog, causing me to miss my connecting flight. At the service counter, a frequent traveler yelled at the attendant, who was doing her best. Afterward, I noticed her starting to cry and asked, "Are you okay? Do you need a minute?" She smiled and said, "Yes, I do!" We chatted, and I could see her shoulders relax and her face lighten. Offering her that moment to unburden was a small but meaningful act of compassion. It reminded me of God's love for each of us, and I try to remember it often to help make the world a little brighter.

Contributed by

Judith Brubaker

Community Member & Family Ministry Volunteer
The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025

JEREMIAH 7:23-28

As a Latina, I have grown up hearing and using the word “ojalá.” The word’s origin can be traced back to 8th Century Spain; derived from Arabic, it means “If it is God’s will.” Through the centuries, and specifically in Latin America, ojalá is translated as “I hope...” or “I wish...,” and mostly without the religious context.

In my parent’s household, they used the word ojalá interchangeably with the phrase, “Si lo quiera Dios” (If God wills it). My parents were Franciscans at heart, and they understood the absolute freedom of God’s will and tried teaching it to me at every turn. The way I understood it, God is love and He does everything He does out of love for us, and with our highest good in mind. So, when my parents said ojalá, it felt more like a prayer. I began using the term to make space for hope and the faith that God would bring what was best for me. As I matured, it became increasingly clear that I need to do more than have hope that what I want aligns with God’s will. It becomes necessary for me to act according to God’s will so that He can make manifest in my life what is my ultimate good.

As I continue this Jubilee Year of Hope and make my way through this Lenten journey, I am reminded that He said, “Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper.” I say “!Ojalá!”

Contributed by

Rosa Rodriguez-Saiz

Executive Assistant to the Office of Liturgy and Music

Our Lady of the Angels Conventual Church



*walk in all the way
that I command you*

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025

MARK 12:28-34

Mark's Gospel speaks to me in an especially personal way. It takes me back to an exceptional night on the ocean. We were heading north along the Baja Peninsula. We had brought school supplies, clothing, and personal items to a number of isolated fishing villages--much offered by state-side friends. The laughter and conversations we shared with the Mexican fishermen and their families is a treasure.

The new moon had created a rich black, backdrop for the enormous milky way and its endless clusters of stars. The brilliance of that night was penetrating and beyond description; it was a moment of grace--a moment of faith turned to hope.

In Mark's rendition of the greatest commandment, a Temple scribe asks Jesus, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" To which Jesus answers, "You shall love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and all your strength, and...love your neighbor as yourself."

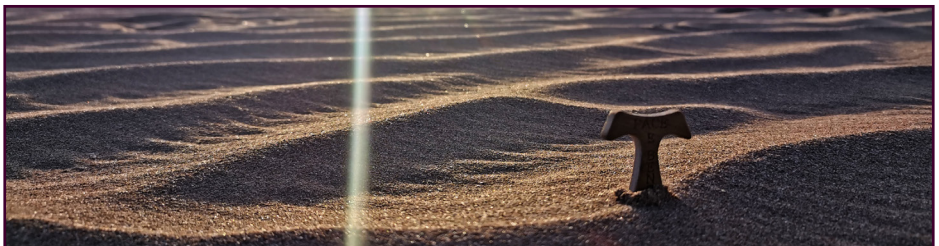
I know I will never be able to love God to any degree that he has loved me—but I keep trying. I only hope He will be pleased with my effort. God has placed us in a world of unfathomable beauty; He has loved us far beyond all understanding through the life and death of His Son. That Jesus heard the truth in the scribe's answer and said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God", gives me every reason to believe...HOPE will not disappoint.

Contributed by

Marge Woods

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Our Lady of the Angels Conventual Church



SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025

LUKE 18:9-14

Today's gospel touches my heart and reminds me of my Tata (Grandfather). He was my first catechist; he led a family of thirteen children and over thirty grandchildren. When I was thirteen, he taught me to read the scripture at Mass. His faithfulness and piety are a strong spiritual example for me. Upon his passing my family prayed the rosary for nine days (a novena) for his soul. After the rosary, much of my time was spent wondering; If a good man like him could request prayers, and would he want us to pray for him? What could this mean for me when I am called home?

And here are the words that provide the meaning for me, and I believe are a last catechism lesson from my Tata. 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' It is these words that are the reason a man, who prayed faithfully every day, who participated and supported church functions, and provided a great example of faithfulness would still ask for intercession and prayers. It is this lesson of humility that I come to understand from his life and words.

So, during this Lenten season, and Jubilee Year of Hope, I look forward to my own renewed faith.

Contributed by

Stephanie Roldan

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MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025

JOHN 4:43-54

I believe that hope is a gift that God gave us when he formed us; we are born with it and we all tap into it, especially as children. The royal official in today's Gospel was filled with hope when he approached Jesus and asked him to come to Capernaum to heal his son. Hope that Jesus could save his son, and hope that his son would live.

To celebrate and live out the Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis calls us to shed our old habits, find our greater hope in the Risen Lord, and become pilgrims of light amid the darkness of this world. The Gospel reading reminds me of the times in my life when I have hoped and prayed for my deepest desires - a loving spouse, a healthy child, a long life for my parents. And even in times of darkness, when all hope seemed to be lost on our fertility journey, the dim light of hope kept burning. Now that I am living the life I prayed to God for, I've noticed that I spend less time in hope. And perhaps I have let the overwhelming needs of the world press down upon me.

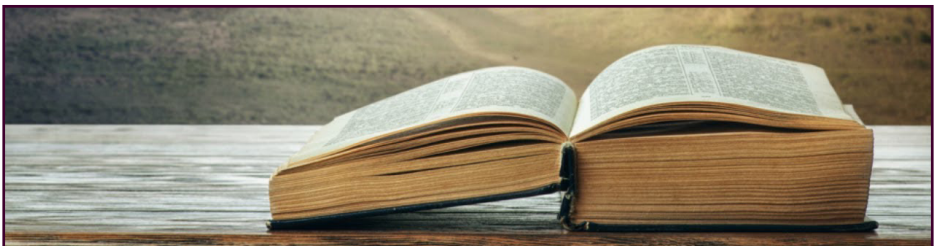
Throughout this Lenten journey, I am praying for hope. Hope for peace and hope for understanding. I'm also praying for the inspiration to act, that I may be called not just to hope, but to transform that hope into bringing new light to others and building a stronger community.

Contributed by

Jenn O'Connor

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TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

JOHN 5:1-16

“Do you want to be well?”

Rooted in the primordial soil of our universe, Jesus’s question resounds in constancy. God has posed this to all creation, and we see how plants, animals, and all of ecology respond: in goodness. The natural world around us fulfills this purpose and obligation because God granted it actualization from the beginning. Human beings, however, have been given a far more difficult task by our Lord.

He has asked us not just to be, but to become.

The original Greek text of Jesus’s above question uses the word *genesthai* (γενέσθαι), which more accurately means “come to be.” Jesus is reminding us that we were lovingly imbued with the divine gift of free will, which also means we were lovingly imbued with a demanding challenge. We received the choice to be good, and we received the choice to avoid goodness entirely.

Those who need our deepest prayers of hope are those who have chosen to do the latter. We exist in a time where iniquity has become even more commonplace. It is easy to feel helpless in the face of obstreperous pride, which is why we must cling to our hope in God’s goodness, which is ever-present. Jesus, in calling us to live our ordinance as God’s creation, tells us that we must not only give love, but we must become love.

As St. Francis did, let us listen. Let us work to heal the world, and let us remember our Lord’s humility as we do.

Contributed by

Vincenzo Torsiello

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The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

JOHN 5:17-30

“I would rather die on my feet than live on my knees”
- *Emiliano Zapata*

When breath no longer fills my lungs and my spirit departs from me, what will I hear? Will my spirit “come out...to the resurrection of life [or] to the resurrection of condemnation” ?

In the Gospel reading, Jesus illustrates that to live a “resurrected life” is to act in accordance with God’s will. This deferential obedience is achieved through his radical and sacrificial acts of love, which culminate in the crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

Prayer is a powerful weapon against evil, but the actions we take are just as significant. It is through action that Jesus wholly and completely abided in the will of the one who sent him. He defended the meek, set the oppressed free, and raised up the poor. It is because of his actions that he was put to death, and it is because of those same actions that we have been set free.

Servant of God Dorothy Day proclaimed that despite the Church’s actions towards the poor, it fails to “set its face against a social order which [makes] so much charity [...] necessary.”

In a time where the will of Christ has been thwarted by a social order of condemnation and systemic oppression, I pray that I am led to act by the will of the one who sent me.

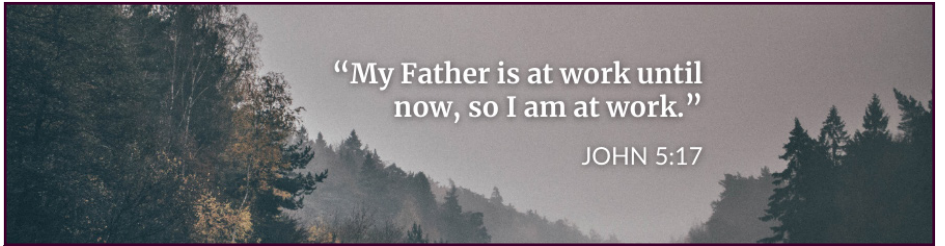
When breath no longer fills my lungs and my spirit departs from me, what do I hope to hear?

Contributed by

Brianna DellaValle

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The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



“My Father is at work until
now, so I am at work.”

JOHN 5:17

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025

JOHN 5:31-47

For centuries, there have always been people who have thirsted for fame and the praise and adulation of others. At it worst, this thirst has exhibited itself in unscrupulous efforts to gain great wealth or political power, or both. By the time of Jesus, the world had already seen the rise and fall of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and the beginning of the Roman Empire.

We may not have the grandiose plans of emperors and dictators, but if we are honest with ourselves, we all desire some praise and admiration from others: a promotion at work, a pat on the back for a job well done, an embrace that expresses affection and love.

Jesus, however, has no interest in the mere adulation of others. He gives no weight to human testimony on his behalf and says, “I do not accept human praise.” He certainly gets noticed through his compelling words and miraculous works, but he wants all the attention to go to his Father, who sent him. This is incredible humility from one who is himself divine in his trinitarian unity with that same Father.

Jesus bemoans that his audience, who might recognize him as somehow important or special in his own right, fails to see that he is deeply connected to his Father and the salvation history expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Human praise comes and goes. Our humble words and actions only have lasting meaning when they give glory to God.

Contributed by

Chris Bork

OCIA Team, Casa Choir Member

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels

the divine son reveals the father

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025
JOHN 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Today's readings are difficult to hear. We are approaching the end of Lent, moving closer to the passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Everything is beginning to intensify.

The book of Wisdom quotes the evil ones as they defend their words and actions and rebuke wisdom and those who seek justice. They have nothing good to say. You can practically hear the snarl in their voices. It is a foreshadowing of Jesus' Passion. John's Gospel is like a chaotic dialogue between Jesus, the disciples, and the people.

These two readings show us the hard truth of the fragile, broken messiness of our lives and world. We see that nothing has changed since these scriptures were written.

Then there is a surprise between these two readings: Psalm 34, a psalm of thanksgiving, "The Lord is near to the broken hearted". In our grief and suffering, God invites us to holiness and offers us the gift of hope. When we are sitting with our pain—as we must—hope is nearby waiting for us to notice. We are never alone in our sorrow. God is always near to us.

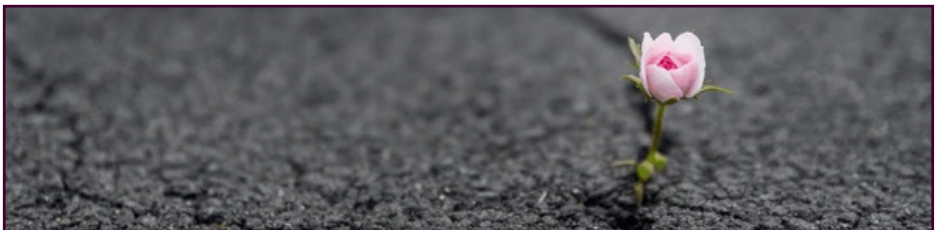
In her poem "Hope Is Not a Bird, Emily, It's a Sewer Rat", Caitlin Seida writes:

Hope - It's what thrives in the discards
And survives in the ugliest parts of our world,
Able to find a way to go on
When nothing else can even find a way in.

Contributed by

Pam Bork

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SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025

JOHN 7:40-53

In this Gospel reading, we see a split among the crowd about who Jesus really is, marking a key moment in his ministry. Some thought he was a prophet, others believed he was the Messiah, and some rejected him, arguing that he couldn't be the Christ because he came from Galilee. The passage ends with the chief priests and Pharisees trying to arrest Jesus, but he escapes, showing the tension between belief and doubt.

This passage gives us an interesting view of hope. Hope is seen in those who recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the one who fulfills prophecy and offers a new kind of salvation. For those who believed, there was hope that God was finally acting in history to restore his people. But the division shows that not everyone shared that hope. Some rejected him because of fear, misunderstanding, or their own expectations of how God should act.

Even with all the opposition, hope still stands. Jesus' words and presence stir something in people, even if they don't fully understand or accept him right away. For those who believe, hope is found in trusting that God's work, even when it seems hidden, is still happening. Hope is the belief that, despite the resistance in the world, God's plan for redemption will come to pass. This passage encourages us to hold onto hope, even when it's unclear how God's promises will unfold.

Contributed by

Richard Guerra

Assistant Director of Liturgy and Music

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



This Is The Christ

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025

JOHN 8:1-11

“I am the light of the world.” What a comforting, freeing reminder. While we are finding our way through our busy—sometimes murky—earthly journey, Jesus reminds us in today’s Gospel that we need not go it alone. That, we are not going it alone. We need only look to Him.

We are navigating a challenging time. Social media and twenty-four-hour news make it easier than ever to get lost in the world’s strife and judge others for their part. Jesus reminds us here that judging is not our role, saying to the Pharisees “I do not judge anyone.” Did I read that right? Yes, Jesus said He did not judge on his earthly journey.

When we’re struggling, hope can feel like exhausting and impossible. How fitting, then, that in this difficult time, Pope Francis invites us to celebrate this Jubilee Year of Hope. It is so natural that we become overwhelmed, lose hope, and struggle to find our way back to it. Today’s Gospel reminds us that God hasn’t tasked us to find hope solely within ourselves. He sent Jesus as His gift of hope in our world.

Yes, I am overwhelmed by what I read in the news, let alone by what I witness on the street. But this Gospel passage not only reminds me of God’s gift of hope to us, but challenges me to find manifestation of that hope each day. Where do you find the manifestation of God’s gift of hope?

Contributed by

Erin Richardson

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The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025

JOHN 8:21-30

Every Lent, my reflections on God's word have been very telling for me. Time and time again I try to glean new messages to break the Christian code to happiness, but I keep coming around to the same two conclusions- (1) I live my "best" life when I'm keenly aware of God's loving presence within it, and (2) life feels empty and unfulfilling when I'm unaware.

Today's Gospel is no different for me. Like the Pharisees, if I try to understand Jesus through a worldly lens, I become confused and disillusioned. I begin asking worldly questions like, "does God purposely separate Himself from me?" and "what if I am truly unworthy to enter the Kingdom?" But, if I instead start with the fundamental truth that my relationship with God shapes me to "belong to what is above," I can see things much more clearly. I start to remember that sin is what clouds my awareness of God's presence. It can cause me to fear what I don't know about the great "I Am", instead of being bathed in the light of God's loving mystery. Accepting mystery enables me to exercise the gifts of faith and hope- faith that God will be with me through everything even when I don't understand how or why, and hope that God will lead me to where I need to be when the injustices of this world bring me to despair.

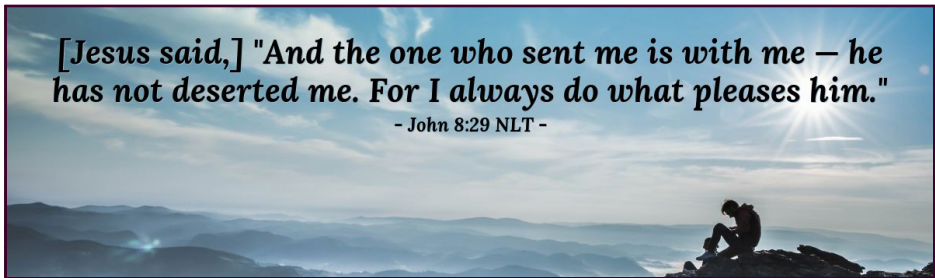
Today's Gospel reminds me again that our loving God is always with me; and prayer, fasting and service are the perfect ways to experience that truth.

Contributed by

Peter Torsiello

Liturgical Musician, Community Member

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



[Jesus said,] "And the one who sent me is with me – he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him."

- John 8:29 NLT -

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

JOHN 8:31-42

We live in an era when everyone seems to have their own truth. Or at least their own way of looking at the truth. “Your truth isn’t my truth,” someone might say. That can turn quickly into a no-win argument, similar to how the Jewish leaders find themselves in John’s gospel. Jesus says, “the truth will set you free.” But how, exactly?

Jesus puts it simply: He came to earth from God. He shares with us the truth he heard from God. And then the simplest truth of all: If you follow my teaching,

you are my disciple, and you know the truth. And that’s what sets you free. Freedom comes from following Jesus on his path. I don’t have to try on different “truths” looking for one that’s trendy or gives me the approval of the world around me.

But Jesus did more than speak his truth—he lived it. That has challenged me to look hard this Lent at how I practice—or fail to practice—the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and service. Jesus lived those disciplines, teaching by example. He turned to prayer and fasting especially when he needed to draw closer to his Father.

I hope to draw closer to the Father during this time of Lent, and closer to the truth of Jesus, as He invites me to simply follow him and be his disciple.

Today’s Gospel challenges me to continue to focus on the words and life of Jesus as the way to the only truth.

Contributed by

Gina Bridgeman

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The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



the truth will set you free

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

JOHN 8:51-59

As I reflected on this Gospel- two questions jumped out at me:

1. Why does Jesus say “Amen Amen I say to you...” Why two Amens? My first thought is that we tend to repeat ourselves when we know our audience isn’t listening so we can drive the point home. We know the Pharisee’s really didn’t understand his message because of their egos, but I also find that often my own ego gets in the way of what Jesus is telling me.

2. Why do we have so much difficulty believing the Good News? Why do the Jewish authorities (and us) respond not with faith and ecstatic joy, but with fear and concern about our human condition? Again, I think it’s because our egoistic doubts distort our thoughts about the beloved nature of God.

My life and the HOPE of my FAITH have taught me that we are LOVED... that we BELONG. Once I became sure of our Original Goodness, bodily DEATH lost its sting; that is, bodily Death has NO power over me.

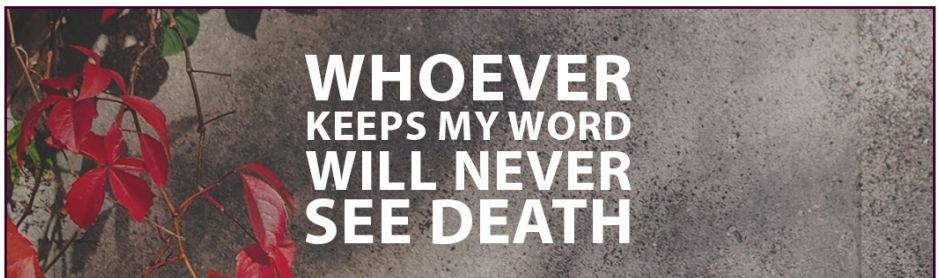
During this Lent, I am paying more attention to the times when I am tempted to think that I don’t deserve to be a chosen child of God. It is during these times when I must be like Jesus and repeat this mantra twice every day: “God has already chosen me, and I am his beloved Child. God has already chosen me, and I am his beloved Child!”

Contributed by

Steve Zaccari

Community Member, OCIA Team

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2025

JOHN 10:31-42

In today's Gospel, Jesus distinctly lays out who He is and where His mission comes from. The passage clearly demonstrates that Jesus' teachings have divine backing. The Gospel also details that Jesus' actions have political consequences, foreshadowing what is to come.

In today's world, the truth can be hard to find, and even harder to stand behind. There have been moments in my life where proclaiming the truth was met with metaphorical throwing stones. As a naval officer, policy maker, and father, standing up for my faith and values has never been more important. Like Jesus, I am called to carry out God's mission.

This Gospel ties deeply into the theme of hope. The very act of threatening Jesus ultimately gained him new supporters. When I face adversity, it will likely make me stronger as well, even if I do not immediately realize it.

As part of my Lenten journey, this passage challenges me to deepen my commitment to prayer, fasting, and service. This often requires sacrificing my comfort and limited free time. Like Jesus delivering His message, these Lenten values will serve me as well as others.

Praying with conviction connects me with God and His guidance. Fasting allows me to detach from distractions and focus on God's presence. Service permits me to carry out His mission to those in need. I hope to meet these challenges as Jesus did in today's Gospel and grow closer to God as a result.

Contributed by

John Bernier

Community Member

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels



SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2024

JOHN 11:45-56

The opening of this Gospel refers to those who had been with Mary at the tomb of Lazarus. How would I have reacted after hearing Jesus say, “Untie him and let him go”? I’d like to think I’d be like those who became believers. But I’m surprised by the reactions of other eyewitnesses. Didn’t they see what I saw? I wonder if it was fear rather than faith that causes them to run off and “tell on” on Jesus. I know what fear does inside me. Fear sees threats (real or imagined) to my safety and security. Fear makes up stories. Fear leaves little room for hope of a good ending.

I’m shocked when I hear these fearful stories about Jesus: This man spells trouble for us. What if he keeps doing these miracles? Surely Rome will find out and destroy us. The high priest Caiaphas proposes a solution: It is better for you that one man dies instead of the nation. And so the plot to kill Jesus is set in motion. He leaves Jerusalem, and people speculate if and when he’ll return.

Tomorrow we Pilgrims of Hope will be witnesses as the story to put an end to Jesus unfolds. When Jesus does return to Jerusalem knowing what awaits him there, I’ll be astonished. When he agonizes in the garden, I’ll keep watch. I’ll stand in disbelief and sorrow at the foot of the cross as Jesus takes his last breath.

Then I’ll wait in hope. I do know how the story ends! Hope knows. Hope believes. Hope does not disappoint.

Contributed by

Diane Owens

Community Member, Livestream Ministry

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels

hope knows
hope believes
hope does not
disappoint

