

Friday (St. Teresa of Avila)

O, Lord, how is it that you can give us so much with your first word, 'Our Father'? Besides humbling yourself to the dust by joining your petition to our own and making yourself the brother of such miserable creatures as ourselves, you give us in your Father's name all that can be given, since you ask him to make us his children. Since he is our Father, he must bear with us however deeply we offend him, if like the prodigal son we return to him. He must pardon us, console us in our trials.

Scripture (1 John 4:8-10)

Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love. This is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him. Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son to expiate our sins.

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2nd Week of Lent

Don't ask, 'What must I do for God?', ask 'What has God done for me?'

I remember being worried about a friend in junior school who announced that he was not giving anything up for Lent. I thought that God would not be pleased with him and that he would earn himself a longer stint in purgatory. The idea that I must earn God's love (and avoid annoying him) is still a part of my thinking, because I quickly feel I am not 'doing enough' if I hear of someone whose fast shows more commitment than my own, or if I 'fall down'. This 'reward and punishment' religion is not based on the Scripture readings which reveal a God who wants to live in a Covenant with his people, a God who is keen to work with people who are not ready to live in it with him.

When God establishes the Covenant, it is with the decidedly confused and unsure Abram, (Gen.15:5-8). Abram has already put his trust in God by leaving his own country behind, trusting in God's promise that he will be the founder of a great nation, with descendants more numerous than the stars. Abram's problem is that he is old, his wife is past childbearing age, and, as yet, he has no children. No wonder he needs a sign to show how God will fulfil his promise. Despite Abram's confusion, he puts his trust in God, who now takes the initiative, and do so passionately, demonstrating his full commitment to shows how the Covenant. The halving of the animals and walking through them is an ancient ritual by which the two parties in a covenant invoke the same fate as the animals on themselves if they break their word. In this case, though, only God walks through, (symbolised by the smoke and the fire): he only requires Abram's trust.

Jesus also knows that his followers need a sign that what lies ahead, (the cross), is part of God's plan to establish the new Covenant. The first part of what happened on the mountain, (Jesus' clothes and face becoming radiant) fills the three apostles with awe, (Luke 9:28-36). Although it seems completely strange to us, the apostles were still in familiar territory: Moses and Elijah who were talking with Jesus had also had encounters with God on the Mountain, (Moses to receive the Law, Elijah commissioned as a prophet.). Together, then, they both make up the aspects of the Covenant, and both had to go down the mountain to bring this Covenant to the people.

Building shelters is what Peter would do at the Feast of Shelters, the harvest festival which is a celebration of the fulfilment of God's promises. Peter seems, then, to think this transfiguration is an end point, the fulfilment of what Jesus has come for. He, and James and John, clearly did not understand the conversation about Jesus' passing, i.e. about what would happen in Jerusalem: it is through his passion, as a very weak human, not in his glorified state, that Jesus will establish the new covenant. This was so far from what Peter thought the Messiah it's no wonder that he's confused, ('did not know what he was saying'), but God speaking from the cloud (as he had to Moses) saying, 'This is my Son. Listen to him' is the sign to prove that this is the right way

It is in this context that Jesus' conversation makes more sense to me. I think that the three apostles struggling to stay awake, (as they will in Gethsemane) shows that it is our limitations which God enters into and transforms. The Transfiguration looks down the mountain, to transform us. From the time of Abraham, God has longed to enact his Covenant, so that we can fully respond to his initiative, which we now can by following the instructions to the sleepy apostles - listen to his Son, who leads us into the fulness of the new life in the new Covenant, now.

Martin Bennett

Monday (C.S.Lewis)

When Christianity says that God *loves* us it does not mean that he has some 'disinterested', because really indifferent, concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of his love. You asked for a loving God, you have one. Not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate, nor the care of a host who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, but the consuming fire himself. How this should be, I do not know: it passes reason to explain why any creature, not to say creatures such as we, should have a value so prodigious in their creator's eyes.

Scripture (Luke 9:28-30, 33-36)

Jesus took with him Peter, John and James. As he was praying, the aspect of his face changed and his clothing became sparkling white. And suddenly, Moses and Elijah were with him, appearing in glory, and they were speaking of the passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. After they had gone, a cloud came and covered them with shadow, and when they went into the cloud, the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud, saying 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.'

Tuesday (A New Catechism)

Jesus *redeemed* or *ransomed* us by his blood. We belong to Jesus once more through his death. The covenant is restored: we were reconciled to God through Jesus' death. We must note the expression. It does not say that God was reconciled to *us*. It is not an angry God who has to be reconciled to man, but man who has to be reconciled to God. This reconciliation is not, as might be imagined, the rigour of retributive justice which demands its pound of flesh, but the creative power of God which makes us just and good. Jesus entered fully into this world which is characterised by sin and death. He became part of our world so that he could there give us his righteousness and holiness.

Scripture (2Cor. 5: 19-21)

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors of Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us, and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God. For our sake he made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God.

Wednesday (Meister Eckhart)

Our human nature has been immeasurably ennobled by the fact that the All-Highest came down and assumed the nature of a human being. In all those things he imparted to his son, Jesus Christ, the Father had me in mind. God gave them to his Son on my account, for I was needy. Therefore, whatever he gave to his Son, he meant for me and truly gave them to me as well as to him. Nothing that he gave to him in human nature is more alien or distant to me than it is to him, for God cannot give only in part. He must either give everything or not at all.

Scripture (John 1:9, 12-14)

The Word was the real light that gives life to everyone; he was coming into the world. To those who accepted him, he gave power to become children of God, to those who believed in his name who was born not from human stock or human desire or human will, but from God himself. The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Thursday (Epistle to Diognetus)

When our iniquity had come to its full height and it was clear beyond all mistaking that retribution in the form of punishment must be looked for, the hour arrived in which God had determined to make known from then onwards his loving kindness and his power. How surpassing is the love and tenderness of God! In that hour, instead of hating us and rejecting us and holding our wickedness against us, he showed how long suffering he is. He bore with us, and, in pity, he took our sins upon himself and gave his own son as a ransom for us - the holy for the wicked, the sinless for sinners, the immortal for mortal. In whom could we, in our lawlessness and ungodliness, have been made holy but in the Son of God alone?

Scripture (Romans 5:1-2, 6-7)

So, then, now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; it is through him, by faith, that we have been admitted into God's favour in which we are living, and look forward exultantly to God's glory. When we were still helpless, at the appointed time, Christ died for the godless. You could hardly find anyone ready to die even for someone upright; though it is just possible that, for a really good person, someone might undertake to die. So it is proof of God's own love for us that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.