

Third Sunday in Lent

Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 20: 1-17

Picture this: The Children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses, have **escaped** from Egypt, watched God destroy Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, and traveled to the foot of Mt. Sinai. **There** God proposed to the Children of Israel that **if** they would make Him their God, **then** He would make them His **special** people, His kingdom of **priests**, and His **holy** nation. (Notice the **conditional clause!**) The Children of Israel **accepted** the proposal, and as our reading begins today, we find the Children of Israel assembled at the foot of the mountain where they are to hear from the voice of God Himself the **terms** of the agreement. Then God descends upon Mt. Sinai in **fire**, enveloping the mountain top in thick **smoke**, all accompanied by thunder, lightning, trembling of the mountain, and a **trumpet** blast that keeps getting louder and **louder**. Then they hear the voice of God:

- I am the **only** god that you may have.
- You are **not** allowed to make **any** object that will serve as a focus of worship. (As a warning, God states that He will **remember** the sins of the fathers when considering the sins of the descendants, even to the 3rd and 4th generation of **those who hate God**, but showing mercy and love to everyone **who loves and obeys God**.)
- You will **hallow** God's name by not using it in vain **chatter**.
- You shall remember the six days of God's **creation** followed by a day of rest by doing the same, **not requiring** any kind of work from man **or** animal on that day of **rest**.
- Honor God by honoring one's **father and mother**; as encouragement to do so, God promises **long** life to those who do.
- Do not **murder** someone.
- Do not have **affairs** with anyone.
- Do not steal from someone by **lies, deceit, or manipulation**.
- Do not **lie** to or about **anyone**.
- Do not **lust** after the persons or property that God has allowed someone else to enjoy.

From the standpoint of a Jewish wedding, these were the **terms** of the **marriage** agreement.

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

As St. Paul begins his **first** letter to the church in Corinth, he deals first of all with **how** the gospel may be perceived. To those who are satisfied with their **own** interpretation of life and the world, the gospel is so much **foolishness**. But to those who humbly acknowledge their need for someone to **rescue** them from their miserable nature and acts, the gospel becomes the very **power** of God **to** rescue them. As a consequence, and ultimately, the wisdom of the **earthly** wise men will be shown to be the most extreme **foolishness**, and what these earthly wise men regarded as God's **utter** foolishness God will have shown to be the **greatest** of wisdom.

In other words, the well-educated, wealthy, noble, elite and powerful people of this world who consider themselves **self-made** and **reject** God's perspective will discover that even the uneducated, weak, poor, and **deplorables** of this world who have **accepted** God's grace will have the life, eternally, that the former **thought** they had.

Gospel Lesson: John 2: 13-22 (23-25)

First of all, some context: Jesus has just been baptized by John the Baptist after being identified by John as **the** lamb of God who takes away the sin of the **world**. Jesus has called a few disciples to follow him. And He has turned water into incredibly good **wine** at a marriage celebration in Cana. Now it is **Passover** time and, in accordance with God's requirement that **every** adult male Jew present himself at the place **God** designated to celebrate the seven-day feast of **unleavened** bread (**Deuteronomy 16:16-17**), Jesus appears in Jerusalem. But when he gets to the **temple**, he finds the courtyard filled, not with worshippers, but with the wealthy, powerful, and manipulative **merchants** and **money changers**, making **obscene** amounts of money off of the **poor** worshippers by charging **exorbitant** prices for the animals needed for the sacrifice (supply and demand, you know), and exacting exorbitant **fees** for the exchange of worldly money into the coinage used in the temple. (Nothing changes, does it?)

Infuriated, Jesus drove the whole lot out of the temple courtyard so that **worshippers** could come to pray and sacrifice in honor of the celebration.

When the Jews and religious leaders asked by what **authority** Jesus did this cleansing, Jesus replied that if they destroyed this temple, He would raise it up in three days. The Jews **pretended** astonishment by misinterpreting his statement, the Jews claiming that Jesus would rebuilt **Herod's** temple in three days. In fact, the Jews knew **exactly** what Jesus was talking about (his body, that would be raised on the third day after his crucifixion), because three years later, **after** Jesus was crucified and buried, they referred to **this** statement of Jesus' when they asked Pilate to put a guard around Jesus' tomb (**Matthew 27:62-64**).

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Old Testament Lesson: Numbers 21: 4-9

It has been over **39 years** since God led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. They are now located just west of Edom, **south-west** of the bottom of the Dead Sea. They need to move to the east-southeast side of the Dead Sea in order to enter the Promised Land at its most strategic site. Standing in the way is **Edom**, the land allotted by God to the descendants of **Esau**, who refuse to let them pass through their territory. The only option is to head **south**, down to the Red Sea (not too far from where they crossed the Red Sea 39 years ago), and then head north-northeast to scoot around Edom and get to the Plains of **Moab** across the Jordan River from Jericho.

But just as the horse starts picking up speed when he sees the **barn**, so too the Children of Israel start getting **impatient**. Their outlet, as usual, is to **complain** to Moses that he and God have led them out of Egypt to let them **die** in the desert. And despite God having provided **food and water** for them every day of their journey (that includes at least 2.5 million people, in addition to their flocks and herds), they state that they loathe this **worthless** food (*i.e.*, the **manna**, the bread from heaven). From its description, the closest thing that we might have to manna is either Danish, or maybe Hawaiian bread. Don't you **love** both? But would you love **either** if you had it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day for the last 39 years? Do you understand **where** the Children of Israel were **coming** from? Would **you** have done better?

But the **point** was that they received this and water for **free** all during this time by **God's grace**, and by complaining to Moses and God about it, they were showing their serious **ingratitude** for God's provision. God punishes the Children of Israel for this sin by sending venomous **snakes** among them, as a result of which many die. The Children of Israel then appeal to Moses to pray to God for them, which he does. God, in His mercy and **compassion**, instructs Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole, so that whoever is bitten may look at the **snake**, **believing** God's promise, and **live** rather than die.

Epistle Lesson: Ephesians 2: 1-10

In his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, St. Paul compares them from what they were **before** they believed to what they are in Christ Jesus **now**, due only to the **grace** given to them by God in Christ Jesus. What were they (and we) like **before** they believed?

- **Dead** in trespasses and sins.
- They followed **Satan**.
- They were governed by the passions and desires of **their** body and mind.
- They were **wrathful, angry, vindictive**.

What caused them (and us) to change at the time that they believed?

- God's great **mercy and His love** for them, even when they were an abomination in His sight, made them **alive** in Christ and raised them with Christ from the dead.
- It was by **God's grace**, and His grace **alone**, that they (and we) were saved through the **faith** that God worked in them (and us).

Why did God do this?

- He created us in Christ Jesus so that we could walk daily in the **good works** that God prepared for us to do **before** the creation of the world.
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Gospel Lesson: John 3: 14-21

Jesus has been having a discussion with **Nicodemus**, a member of the prestigious ruling council, about how to be **saved**. He had told Nicodemus that he had to be **born again**. When this didn't seem to ring a bell, Jesus explained that people had to experience a **spiritual** birth, performed by the **Holy Spirit**. Still no bell. So then Jesus resorted to recalling some well-known Jewish history, that of the Children of Israel being saved after being bitten by a venomous snake, by looking at a **bronze** snake mounted on a pole. Similarly, Jesus states, **He** is going to be lifted up on a pole (*i.e.*, a cross), so that whoever looks at **Him** in faith (*i.e.*, **believing**) will be **saved** (*i.e.*, have eternal life). Then Jesus emphasizes that God did **not** send Him into the world to judge and **condemn** the world, but rather to **save** the world through the means of **faith**. Note that those who are **not saved**, are not saved because of **their** choice: they **refuse** to believe in Jesus, the Son of God. Why? God's **light** (*i.e.*, **Jesus** and his righteousness— **John 1:5-6 and 9-12**) came into the world with the **invitation** to them of eternal life for **free**. But those who **refuse** to believe prefer to **continue** in their evil deeds, and consequently **hate** Jesus and anyone who **believes** in Jesus, because **their** evilness is exposed by the believers' **righteousness**, in comparison. But those who do righteous **deeds** want those deeds to be known, so that **God** may receive the **glory** He deserves.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Old Testament Lesson: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Jeremiah was God's messenger to the **Southern** Kingdom, or **Judah**, toward the end of its life before it went into Babylonian Captivity. For over **forty years**, he decried the **breaking** by the Children of Israel of God's **covenant** that was inscribed on the two tablets of stone at **Mt. Sinai**, where God considered Himself their **husband** and they His **wife**. The **apostasy** of the Children of Israel was then rightly considered as **spiritual adultery**.

In today's reading, God states that a time is coming when He will institute a **new** covenant with those who **believe** Him, unlike the covenant that He had made with the Children of Israel. In this **new** covenant, God will not write His laws on two tablets of stone, but instead **on the hearts** of His Children. The consequence of this: His Children will know Him, and **He will forgive** their iniquities and no longer **remember** their sins. And **that** is the covenant that we have **today** with God through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 5: 1-10

The writer of Hebrews, in today's reading, distinguishes between the **priest** in the days of the Children of Israel from the Priest that **Jesus** is. First of all, he notes that the **Old Testament** priest was chosen by God from the tribe of **Levi** and a descendant of **Aaron**, the first priest. The job of the priest was to **intercede** to God for the people, who had to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. The priest, however, could not be **arrogant** but rather **humble**, since he **himself** was sinful and had to offer gifts and sacrifices for **himself** first.

In contrast, although Jesus is also called by God to be a priest, it is not after the Old Testament covenant. First of all, Jesus is from the tribe of **Judah**, not Levi, hence does not **qualify** to be a priest under the **Old Testament** covenant. Instead, Jesus is called to be a priest under the order of **Melchizedek (Psalm 110:1-4)**, a mysterious figure who was described as the priest of **Salem** and to whom Abraham offered **tithes (Gen. 14:17-20)**. In addition, since Jesus is

sinless, He did not **have** to offer gifts and sacrifices for Himself. But He did **intercede** for the people through prayers and supplications, and eventually **offered Himself as a sacrifice** for the people. And even though He is God's **Son**, he nevertheless as a human being had to **learn obedience through suffering**, just as every human being needs to do.

Gospel Lesson: Mark 10: (32-34) 35-45

Continuing the ministry of Jesus from three weeks ago, as recorded by St. Mark, we find in today's reading some insight into the **thinking** of those first disciples. These were disciples, not of some **itinerant preacher** but of the Messiah **Himself!** So there was plenty of opportunity for **pride and arrogance** to creep in. In today's reading this is shown by James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, asking Jesus to put the two in the most **prominent** positions to Him in heaven, one seated on His right and the other on His left. Jesus' response? "You don't know what you are asking." Jesus notes that those positions are reserved for those for whom they were **prepared** by God the **Father**, and the requirements demand a **sacrificial** giving of oneself on behalf of the Kingdom of God.

The response of the two disciples? Oh sure, **we're** good with that. Jesus observes that they will **indeed** sacrifice themselves for the Kingdom, but then points out that it is not **He** who makes that decision of who sits next to Him in the Kingdom. Of course, the rest of the disciples are **incensed** that James and John were making an early pitch for the most prominent seats in heaven. Jesus then lays things out for all of them. **Honor** in the Kingdom of Heaven is not dependent on who is the **greatest**, but who is the most **humble**, servant. One does not strive to **get**, but to **give**.

Palm Sunday

Old Testament Lesson: Zechariah 9: 9-12

Zechariah was God's messenger to the people of **Judah** who had **returned** from Babylonian Captivity 20 years **earlier**. Although the returning captives looked forward to the glory of Israel of much **earlier** days as they went about the tasks of rebuilding both the city of Jerusalem **and** also the temple, they did not expect the **fierce** opposition from their new neighbors, nor the **lack** of compassion exhibited to them by certain of the returning captives. As a result, there was much **discouragement** among the people. To these people God sent Zechariah, to remind the people of God's **love** and of His knowledge of their **predicament**, and to promise to them at the right time a **glorious** king.

In today's reading, we see God through Zechariah telling the people to rejoice, because a **righteous** king is coming to them, bringing them **salvation**. How would they **recognize** this king? He would be **humble**, and he would be riding on the foal of a **donkey**. Furthermore, his message would be one of **peace** and of the **freeing of prisoners**. Probably not realized by Zechariah's listeners were that these promises of God included **salvation from sin, freeing from the bondage to sin, and eternal peace with God**. On the other hand, their expectation of a victorious **earthly** king should have been muted by the fact the this king was not riding the **horse** of military **might**, but the donkey of **humility**.

Epistle Lesson: Philippians 2: 5-11

In his letter to the Philippian church, St. Paul takes a moment to explain what **true humility** really is. He does this by taking the example of **Jesus** who, although **God**, did not appear in the likeness of God but in the likeness of a **human being**. Furthermore, as a human being, He always conducted Himself in the manner of the **lowliest** of servants, even to the extent of allowing Himself to experience death in the most degrading and inhumane manner then known. Because of this extreme of **servanthood**, God the Father elevated Jesus to the **highest position in heaven** beside Himself, a position to be respected and acknowledged by **every** created being, that **Jesus is the only Lord!**

Gospel Lesson: Mark 14:1 - 15:47

As we continue to read St. Mark's account of the ministry of Jesus, we find today's lesson centered around Jesus' **last** hours of life as a lowly **human being**. After succeeding in getting **false** witnesses to condemn Jesus, the Jewish leaders now take Jesus to Pilate in order to convince him to put Jesus to death **for** them. In the course of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus, Jesus admits that He truly **is** the King of the Jews. But nobody can bring any evidence that Jesus is the leader of an **insurrection** against the Romans. So the Jewish leaders devise **another** scheme to get what they want. They stir up the common people to demand that Pilate release the insurrectionist and murderer, **Barabbas**, and crucify Jesus instead. (The release of a Jewish prisoner became a custom of the Romans in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover to reduce local friction), The people, not appreciating the significance of what they were **conned** into doing, become a **blindly obedient** mob led by the Jewish leaders. And the scheme works.

The torture and crucifixion of Jesus then follows. The only comment one can make is that the **abuse** that was involved appears to be the bar to which certain people in this world today still try to reach as they **use, abuse, and torture** their fellow man. The **demons of hell** are still around.

The crucifixion is notable for the many prophecies that were fulfilled, and the gracious and **compassionate** conduct that Jesus exhibited to his fellow man despite his agony. Notable are one of the **last** statements of Jesus, asking His Father **why** He has forsaken Him, thus indicating that **Jesus** had somehow suffered the **eternal** separation from God that **we** should have received in eternal death. In any case, the centurion in charge of the crucifixion was so **impressed** by what he saw and heard that he acknowledged that Jesus certainly **must** have been the Son of God.

Since this was a Friday, the day before the **Sabbath**, there was insufficient time left in the day to **anoint** the body for burial. There was only time to place the body in a tomb **before** sunset.

Alternate Gospel Reading #1: Mark 15: 1-47

It is Maundy Thursday of Holy Week. Jesus has been **betrayed** by Judas and brought before the **Jewish Council** which concludes that Jesus is worthy of death. As our reading begins for today, we find Jesus delivered to **Pilate** for trial. This presents a thorny problem for Pilate, since the Romans require him to deliver **justice** while making sure that the **natives** are happy and do not **riot**. **This** Pilate accomplishes by ordering Jesus to be **crucified** while releasing the murderer **Barabbas** to the people. After Jesus undergoes **torture** at the hands of the Roman soldiers, he is led off to be crucified. Recognize that the person to be crucified was supposed to carry the **crossbar** of the cross to the place of crucifixion. But because of the torture already endured by Jesus in this case, he was too **weak**. So the soldiers forced a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the crossbar for Jesus. Then Jesus was crucified, with his crime being “**King of the Jews**.” As time elapsed, Jesus was subjected to **mocking** from not only the two prisoners crucified with him, but also from the **religious** leaders. Then, after six hours on the cross, Jesus indicates that he has experienced the second death **for** us by crying out to his Father, “Why have you **forsaken** me?” And when Jesus breathes his last, the **veil** of the temple, separating the Holy Place where the priests worked from the Holy of Holies where God **Himself** dwelt, was ripped apart by God himself, indicating that those who accept the **substitutionary** sacrifice of Jesus for them now have **direct access** to God the Father. The manner of Jesus’ death was so extraordinary that even the **Centurion** in charge of the crucifixions could exclaim that truly Jesus **was** the Son of God.

In the meantime, the women who had been supporting Jesus in his ministry watched not only this whole **process**, but also where Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Council but also a **believer** in Jesus who had asked Pilate for Jesus’ body, had buried Jesus, so that they could properly anoint the body after the Sabbath day was past.

Alternate Gospel Reading #2: John 12: 20-43

Jesus has had a very eventful series of weeks, marked by the raising of **Lazarus** from the dead with the subsequent decision by the Jewish religious leaders to kill Jesus because they feared for their jobs with the Romans; the **anointing** of Jesus by Mary, the **sister** of Lazarus; and the triumphal **entry** of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It is at this point that our reading for today begins. Some Greeks (in other words, **Gentiles**) who had come for the Passover wanted to see **Jesus**, causing Jesus to exclaim that, like a **seed** when planted **dies** to become something greater and more fruitful, so **his** dying would result in a fruitful life for many others. Similarly, Jesus notes, whoever wants to serve **him** must be willing to lose **his** life, because by losing **his** life he will receive **greater** life.

When Jesus asks the Father to **glorify** his name, the Father responds by speaking from **heaven**. Jesus explains that this indicates that the hour is at hand when the **current** ruler of the world will be deposed as **Jesus** is lifted up on the cross. This prompts the crowd to start **quibbling** with Jesus, saying that the Christ lives **forever**, so how can Jesus say that the Christ must **die** on a cross? Frustrated by their response and their **refusal** to believe him, Jesus warns that he, as the **light** of the world (**John 1: 5-6, 9-12**), would soon no longer be with them, bringing to remembrance the words of the prophet **Isaiah**, who prophesied that these people would **not** believe what was revealed to them, and that they **could not** believe because they had **hardened** their hearts, like Pharaoh.

Interestingly, John makes a comment about the **hypocrisy** of some of the authorities who, although they **believed** in Jesus nevertheless would not **admit** to it because they did not want to be **excommunicated** from the synagogue, meaning that the accolades of man were more important to them than the accolades of God.

Good Friday**(Friday before Easter)****Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 52: 13—53: 12**

Isaiah, as we will recall, was God's messenger to **Judah**, the Southern Kingdom for about 40 years, starting around 740 B.C. His messages called for **repentance, punishment** for the **lack** of repentance, and **restoration** for those who repented. In today's reading, however, we have a prophecy of the crucified Jesus. In particular, we see that Jesus will

- be lifted up,
- have a marred appearance, beyond human semblance, and
- sprinkle many nations—presumably with his shed blood which makes them holy.

Then Isaiah compares the young Jesus to the bloody figure hanging on the cross, with no beauty or majesty, or even form. Furthermore, he is grieved and sorrowful over the crowd below him who have despised and rejected him. Why? Isaiah then tells us:

- he was pierced for our transgressions
- he was crushed for our iniquities
- he was chastised in order to bring us real peace, and
- his wounds bring us healing.

Although it was we who as sheep lost our way, it was Jesus who suffered the punishment for our straying. And even though he was totally innocent of all the charges against him, he did not rigorously defend himself; instead, he remained silent. He then was killed for the sins of the people, and buried in a borrowed tomb. But then Isaiah notes what Jesus accomplished: by Jesus bearing the sins of the many, the many will be declared righteous. Therefore his reward will be great.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 4: 14 -16; 5: 7-9

The author of Hebrews is undertaking to show just **what** Jesus is now doing for us. For example, he is our great high **priest, interceding** on our behalf before God the Father. But this is not just any ol' high priest, who does not understand our weaknesses. No, this is one who has been tempted in **every** way that we are being tempted, but without sinning. So when we come to Jesus, we can receive **mercy** for our **failures**, and **grace** in our times of **need**. After all, when Jesus walked this earth, he too offered prayers to God the Father during his trials and tribulations, and as a true human son, **learned** obedience through his **suffering**. Thus he became the source of **eternal** salvation to **all** who serve and believe in him.

Gospel Lesson: John 18: 1 - 19: 42

St. John records for us the events in the life of Jesus over the last 24-hour period of his human life on earth:

- He **prayed** in the Garden of Gethsemane,
 - Jesus is **betrayed** as Judas leads a mob into the garden to arrest him,
 - Jesus ensures that the remaining disciples are not also arrested,
 - Jesus **heals** the servant's ear that had been cut off by Peter,
 - Jesus is brought before Annas, the father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest,
 - Peter follows Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, and there **denies** three times that he knows Jesus,
 - Jesus is questioned, and is **assaulted** when they don't like his answers,
 - Jesus is brought to Pilate in the hope that **he** will kill Jesus on the behalf of the Jews,
 - Pilate sees through the Jews' **scheme**, but is forced to **condemn** Jesus in order to prevent a **riot**, an event that would be disastrous for his career,
 - Jesus is **mocked** and then **whipped** to within an inch of his life by the Roman soldiers,
 - Pilate has Jesus **crucified** outside of the city, between two robbers,
 - Pilate gets back at the Jews by posting the reason for Jesus' crucifixion: "Jesus of Nazareth, **King of the Jews**,"
 - The soldiers **cast lots** for Jesus' clothes,
 - Jesus sees his **mother** as well as St. John standing beneath the cross; and in order to ensure that she is taken care of (since her first-born son is being killed), he appoints John to take care of her,
 - Having completed all tasks given him by God the Father, Jesus **gives up** his spirit, and
 - Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus retrieve Jesus' **body** from Pilate, and bury it in a new, nearby tomb, since the Jewish day of rest was fast approaching, when no work was allowed.
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Alternate Gospel Lesson: John 19: 17-30

Pilate has just ordered Jesus to be **crucified**. However, he is still **smarting** from the fact that the Jews **forced** him to condemn Jesus by organizing a **riotous** crowd. So when he posts the reason for Jesus' crucifixion, he writes, "Jesus of Nazareth, **King of the Jews**." We then see the soldiers **cast lots** for Jesus' clothes, followed by Jesus seeing his mother as well as St. John standing beneath the cross. Jesus recognizes that, as her first-born son, he will no longer be able to take care of his widowed mother, so he assigns St. John to do that for him. As the hours pass, Jesus recognizes that he has **completed** all the tasks given him by his Father for the salvation of all mankind, so he gives up his spirit.

Resurrection of Our Lord (Easter Day)

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 25: 6-9

Isaiah was God's messenger to the **Southern** Kingdom, or **Judah**, during the period that the **Northern** Kingdom reached its demise. Judah was not doing much **better**, since its king at the beginning of Isaiah's ministry was King **Ahaz**, as **evil** as King Ahab of the **Northern** Kingdom some 130 years earlier. In today's reading, God is **reaching out** to a **rebellious** nation, promising that **if** they will return to Him, **then** He will prepare for **all** people on "this mountain," believed to be a referral to heaven, a **feast** of the finest of foods and wines. In addition, he will remove the **veil** over all nations that has kept them from appreciating the **true** God. Furthermore, God will remove **sorrow** and **death** as well as the **reproach** from others of God's children. When that happens, people will **rejoice** and be **glad** in the God and Lord for whom they have waited to **save** them.

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

As St. Paul finishes his **first** letter to the church in Corinth, he emphasizes the **basics** of the gospel that they are to retain if they wish to be saved:

- Jesus died for our **sins** in accordance with Old Testament prophecies.
- He was buried and **raised** from the **dead**, again in accordance with Old Testament prophecies.
- Witnesses to Jesus' resurrection include **Peter**, then the **remaining** apostles, then more than **500** believers, then **James** (Jesus' brother), and then to St. Paul **himself**.

St. Paul acknowledges that he does not **deserve** to be called an apostle, since it was **he** who was such a dedicated **persecutor** of the early church. But it was by God's **grace** that he became an apostle, and by God's grace that he was able to preach the gospel to so many Gentiles **despite** his many trials.

Gospel Lesson: Mark 16: 1-8

As we continue St. Mark's recording of Jesus' ministry on earth, we find several women assembling early at the **tomb** on the first day of the week (*i.e.*, the day **after** the Sabbath) to anoint Jesus' body. Their first question, as they traveled to the tomb, was who would roll away the large **stone** for them that blocked the entrance to the tomb. But when they arrived, they discovered that the stone had **already** been rolled away. Entering the tomb, they were alarmed by a **young man** in a white robe, sitting there. He told them that Jesus, whom they were seeking, was **risen** and would meet them in **Galilee**. Then he told them to tell Peter and the other disciples this good news.

If **you** had been one of the women, would **you** have been able to wrap your mind around this turn of events?