

Sunday Gospel Reflections for Lent 2023 With a Connection to God's Creation

Diocese of Syracuse, [Care for our Common Home Task Force](#)

As Winter gradually slides behind us here in the Northern Hemisphere, Lent comes upon us with its opportunities to reflect and commit (or recommit) to what is truly important. One truly important gift we have been given is God's Earth and its creation. The Earth where we live is so perfectly placed in relationship with the Sun and in constant motion necessary to nurture our lives, all other types of life and the elements needed for life to flourish.

Our Diocesan Care for our Common Home Task Force hopes these weekly reflections throughout Lent and continuing until Easter Sunday based on our Sunday Gospel texts help all of us to appreciate God's gift of creation more deeply. These reflections are prayerfully offered as we more firmly establish our foundational relationship with God our Creator, with Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit.

First Sunday of Lent – Temptations in the desert - Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert" (Matthew 4:1, New American Version) where he fasted, prayed, and was tempted.

Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the desert? Are we not in some way brought back to what is most important by experiencing any natural place? The desert was a significant natural space near Jesus.

God's creation, whether it be a beach, a forest, the seashore, a meadow, a desert, or any other quiet, natural place can bring us closer to God, just as the desert in Galilee helped Jesus in his humanity resist temptations and confirm his call to live a life full of compassion and love.

Consider getting more in touch with God's creation in the days and weeks ahead. As Spring unfolds, consider a walk or a sit in nature's midst. Recall how perhaps past experiences with nature have deepened your commitment to our Lord. New experiences with creation help us to more appreciate God's beauty and love. New experiences with nature also refresh us and remind us how important God's creation really is. We came from the Earth and to the Earth we shall return.

Second Sunday of Lent – Transfiguration – Jesus takes three of his disciples up on a high mountain where God directly informs them who Jesus is and that they are to listen to him. Jesus' life was God's response to the signs of Jesus' time pumping compassion, love, and truth to everyone who would relate to him in a world with lots of turmoil, anxiety, and oppression. Hmmm. Jesus' compassion, love and truth certainly seem to be applicable to us in our time as well, don't they?

Notice Jesus' transfiguration took place on a high mountain, a natural place with quiet and vastly visible surroundings. His temptations took place in a desert, and His transfiguration took place on a high mountain. God's creation truly does pour out many opportunities for getting in touch with what is most important. What are the signs of our time?? Do we hear God's voice

Sunday Gospel Reflections for Lent 2023 With a Connection to God's Creation

and act upon it? Is what we spend our time and energy considering and doing what is truly most important to us and to our future generations? Let us listen to God's son and then act on what we hear from God.

Third Sunday of Lent – The Samaritan woman at the Well – Jesus reaches out and communicates God's love to anyone open to knowing God more fully. Jesus travelled and communicated His compassion, love, and truth with different people, many of whom were very different from himself and scorned by the culture of his time. Jesus' compassionate actions and recipients' openness are the two essential ingredients that made faith come alive to so many. The Samaritan woman who met Jesus at her community well faced herself, connected with God's love, and then responded by sharing her new revelations with others, all of which led to her becoming more of her true self as a compassionate transmitter of God's love and truth to her community.

Do we realize the deep and joyful love, compassion, and truth that God gives us? Are we transmitting God's love and truth to those around us? The Samaritan woman, an outcast in her place and time, can help us become more of our true selves lovingly using God's gifts for ourselves, for others, and for all of God's creation.

Fourth Sunday of Lent – The man born blind – Most of us cannot readily imagine what it is like to be blind from birth. In this Sunday's gospel, a man born blind is healed without first asking for healing. And as the man realizes the wondrous gift given to him, he gradually comes to understand and gratefully appreciate the gift of sight given by Jesus to the point that the man is willing, for the sake of speaking truth without fear and keeping his relationship with Jesus, to sacrifice his place in his community when the leaders of his community and even his parents disown him.

What aspects of our lives does our Lord want in particular for us to see at this time? What truths are we blind to in our relationships and in the world around us? For example, do we realize that the entire world we live in came into being through God's awesome and beautiful efforts over thousands of centuries? Pope Francis tells us, "We are born, beloved creatures of our Creator, God of love, into a world that has lived long before us. We belong to God and to one another, and we are part of creation." (Let Us Dream, The Path to a Better Future, Pope Francis, 2020, page 13). We are part of the natural world from which we have come.

Jesus read the signs of his time and acted as the Father's presence on earth. The man born blind was given a great gift after which he had to make a choice. Are we not called to do the same? Our well-being depends fundamentally on the well-being of God's Earth.

Fifth Sunday of Lent – The Raising of Lazarus – In this Sunday's gospel reading, Jesus shows us the power of his loving compassion. With friends and many others in grief, Jesus himself weeps over Lazarus, and then, despite doubt from some, Jesus restores Lazarus' human life which reminds all that were present of God's loving, powerful care which will last forever.

Sunday Gospel Reflections for Lent 2023 With a Connection to God's Creation

Likewise, our lives may need some restoration. God empowers us to live lives modeled on the life of Jesus, full of truth, love, and goodness. When someone or some part of our existence cries out in pain, we are called to respond.

God's earth, thriving long before humans came into existence, is grieving and crying out to us in pain! Species of life are being crowded out and/or dying off. Very rare floods, strong storms, droughts, wildfires, more acidic oceans, and rising sea levels are evident. Can we get in touch with that pain? If we remain silent during pain, we can easily become complacent with it. And yet, through pain, God continues to be ready to show us The Way. Are we ready to respond? If so, how?

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord – Jesus courageously enters Jerusalem for his last few days on earth to proclaim truth and, as a result, to bear awful pain before entering into fullness of life with God. More than once in the Gospels, Jesus proclaims that he is the truth, and the truth can set us free. As Lent comes to its end for this year, are we more ready and willing to proclaim and act with Jesus' life as our guide? Pilate asked Jesus, "what is truth?" Let us pray that we can and do uncover truth and act on it with compassionate love in our personal relationships and also in addressing our societal challenges just like Jesus did.

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord – We as followers of Jesus believe God's goodness wins out over evil. We are resurrection people! Do we act like we believe?

How can we change our ways to more fully demonstrate the huge, wonderful impact that Jesus' resurrection has on our lives? For example, ways we can better care for God's creation include utilizing fewer resources, preserving natural lands, and consuming differently to have less of an impact on God's earth. How we respond to God's love and beauty can be so beneficial to ourselves and to others! Our actions as individuals' and as households' matter. And we can start out modestly to help make our adjustments more long-term.

If you would like to learn more about how you can better care for God's creation, the members of our Diocesan Care for our Common Home Task Force are available through our diocesan website at: www.syracusediocese.org/being-catholic/pope-francis/laudato-si/, join our Facebook page on our Diocesan website to use for sharing reflections and information (Link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1113353172703971>).

Let's further unleash God's power within us!