

“Making All Things New”

Welcome to Your SCC group, Lent 2019

General overview:

Thank you for your desire to deepen your relationship with God in a Small Church Community this Lenten season. As we pray and share in these gatherings, we help each other to see that God is always active in each of our lives and all throughout creation.

The readings for these weeks are rich in metaphor, physical signs, and parables that help us to understand God’s great love and radical mercy. These readings tell us that God is continually doing something new in our lives, striving to renew us, refresh us and bring us all home.

God’s desire to co-create with us is evident when God calls out to Moses (March 24) to forge a new relationship between God and God’s people. The woman caught in adultery (April 7), and the Prodigal Son (March 31), are not “held” in their past sins. They are made new by the father’s mercy and love. And when the disciples get to see Jesus in the transfiguration? Well, that’s certainly a glimpse of God’s divine glory, and also a vision of our own potential to become filled and transformed through God’s grace (March 17). We also have the parable of the fig tree (March 24), and like that tree, we are fed, nurtured and given the chance for new growth -- the chance to bear good fruit. The image of the fig tree comes up several times in these Lenten readings, reminding us that we are always given the chance to grow and to change our hearts, and we can always come home.

***“Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created,
And you will renew the face of the earth.” (Prayer to the Holy Spirit)***

Pope Francis on Lent:

With its invitations to conversion, Lent comes providentially to awaken us ... Why must we return to God? Because something is not right in us, not right in society, in the Church, and we need to change, to give it a new direction. And this is called needing to convert! Once again Lent comes to make its prophetic appeal, to remind us that it is possible to create something new within ourselves and around us, simply because God is faithful, always faithful, for he cannot deny himself, he continues to be rich in goodness and mercy, and he is always ready to forgive and start afresh.

(Homily, March 5, 2014)

More on Lent from Pope Francis:

The season of Lent is a favourable time to ... receive the ever new, joyful and hope-filled proclamation of the Lord's Passover. The Church in her maternal wisdom invites us to pay special attention to anything that could dampen or even corrode our believing heart.

We are subject to numerous temptations. Each of us knows the difficulties we have to face. And it is sad to note that, when faced with the ever-varying circumstances of our daily lives, there are voices raised that take advantage of pain and uncertainty; the only thing they aim to do is sow distrust. If the fruit of faith is charity – as Mother Teresa often used to say – then the fruit of distrust is apathy and resignation. Distrust, apathy and resignation: these are demons that deaden and paralyze the soul of a believing people.

Lent is the ideal time to unmask these and other temptations, to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus... Pause, see and return. Return to the house of your Father. Return without fear to those outstretched, eager arms of your Father, who is rich in mercy, who awaits you.

You can read the Pope's full Ash Wednesday homily at:

<https://www.romereports.com/en/2018/02/14/pope-francis-ash-wednesday-homily/>

How would St. Ignatius study the readings? Here are a few suggestions:

Ignatian values: With our parish's emphasis on the teachings of St. Ignatius, we can ask ourselves a few questions as we share and study scripture together. Some questions to consider:

- "Where did you find God in this?"
- "What intuition have I had of God at work in my life? Do I respond in gratitude to the many gifts that God has given me, especially his great love for me?"

When looking at scripture, a good approach is to ask, "Can you see yourself in this story? What sights can you imagine as you read the passage? What can you hear or smell?"

- Did anything stand out for me – a particular word or phrase? Is this something that I should spend more time and reflection on?
- Is it stirring something in me? Is there a reason this may have stood out? Perhaps God may be trying to say something to me here? What might that be? What is God calling me to do?