

May have had technical issues - when sending it does not, it delays, and other times it sends first time??

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 15, 2026

Choose life and not death.

Rather, we speak of God's wisdom.

"But I say to you."

-rvb.

On February 18, Ash Wednesday, we begin our daily Lenten journey with Jesus. Along the way, we go to an "out of the way place" to encounter Haikus (line 1 - 5 syllables, line 2 - 7 syllables, line 3-5 syllables) =17 syllables reflecting the meaning and messages of the scripture readings), prayer, coping with stress, doing good deeds, and thought-provoking quotations. Let us begin the Resurrection Steps of Our Lenten Journey.

May Jesus not find us sleeping, perplexed or afraid to remain at the cross. Like Jesus, God will surprise us with the Resurrection steps of our Lenten Journey. It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being." Acts 17:28. -rvb.

Ash Wednesday – February 18

Joel 2:12-18 – God speaks to the heart/Passion full of compassion/now be on your way.

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 – We are hollow reeds/God's holy breath filling us/Grace builds on nature.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 – Enter God's presence/Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving/No one else should see.

Prayer: Lent is a time to spring to action! May I not retreat into the selfish corners of my heart and soul.

Coping with stress:

- 1. Arise 15 minutes earlier in the morning – stretch, prayer of gratitude, and catch 5 minutes in the sun's rays.**

Two good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Commit yourself to growth (Be Growth-oriented). The more you grow, the better you become.**
- 2. Work on your negative traits. Are there any traits you dislike about yourself? It can be challenging to overhaul your character at once. On the other hand, if you address one negative trait at a time, it is a lot more manageable and achievable.**

Quotation. “There are, in every age, new errors to be rectified, and new prejudices to be opposed.” Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Thursday after Ash Wednesday.-February 19

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 – Love and you will soar/While ‘walking dead’ sink down under/Truly a ‘grave’ matter.

Luke 9:22-25 – A cross is a cross/Heavy with much suffering/Do not double-cross him.

Prayer: God of fidelity, your presence overflows the boundaries of my soul. Help me to choose life.

Coping with stress: Write down appointment times on calendar or in cell phones. “The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory.”-Chinese proverb.

Two good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Identify your ideal self. What is your ideal self like? Picture it in your mind and then write down all your ideal traits. Then, start living true to your ideal self.**
- 2. Find a role model. Having a role model inspires us and gives us an image of who we can be. Who is/are your role model(s), and what do you like about them?**

Quotation. “I am in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices – made up of likings and dislikings.” (1834-1910)

Friday after Ash Wednesday.-February 20

Isaiah 58:1-9 – Fashionable fast/ A heart in need of balance/Unite with the poor.

Matthew 9:14-15 – At first view, unfair/Being the life of parties/Soberness will come.

Prayer: Do not let me settle in my comfortable pew. Now is the time to share my feast with the famished.

Coping with stress: Make duplicates of all keys. Find a secret spot for your house key.

Two good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be a role model. When we are role models to others, it pushes us to think carefully about our actions and sets us up to a higher standard. In being a role model, it is not about making yourself into someone you are not. It is about living true to your ideal self. How can you be an inspirational guide to others? Live by example.**
- 2. Be a better child to your parents. You only have two parents in your life, so appreciate the time you have with them. If your relationship with your parents is non-ideal, it does not mean that everything ends here. I used to have a poor relationship with my parents until I achieved a resolution in this area recently.**

Quotation. “Everyone is a prisoner of his own experiences. No one can eliminate prejudices – just recognize them.” Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965)

Saturday after Ash Wednesday.-February 21

Isaiah: 9-14 – The ‘have-nots’ will have/Abundance of bread and wine/No more tears will flow.

Luke 5:27-32 – A call, a challenge/Coins no longer jingle/Come and sup with me.

Prayer: Jesus, you invite me to break bread with you. In service to others, may I be broken for them.

Coping with stress: Practice preventive maintenance: your car, appliances, home, and relationships like to break down or fall apart.

Two Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be a better friend to your friends. Think about how you can be a better friend to your friends.**
- 2. Be a better sibling if you have siblings. If you are lucky enough to have a brother or sister, treasure them. Spend more time with them; show them care and concern. Look out for them if you need to.**

Quotation. "If we believe absurdities we shall commit atrocities." Voltaire (1694-1778)

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Reading 1

Sirach 15:15-20

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you;
if you trust in God, you too shall live;
he has set before you fire and water
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.

**Before us are life and death, good and evil,
whichever he chooses shall be given him.**

Immense is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power, and all-seeing.
The eyes of God are on those who fear him;
he understands man's every deed.

**No one does he command to act unjustly,
to none does he give license to sin.**

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In this reading from Sirach, the focus is on our responsibility for sin. If we choose to sin it is our own responsibility, for God created us with the power of choice which can be tempered by mitigating circumstances making us culpable. Whether one chooses obedience to the law or to the spirit of the law which leads to a fuller spiritual life, disobedience leads to the

weakening of our spiritual lives as we distance ourselves from God's loving presence. Here are guidelines to help you decide between what is good or sinful:

Questions you should ask yourself when making an ethical decision—

- a. Could the decision become habit forming? Depending on what it is, either do it or do not do it. Aristotle said, "The way I think, determines what I say, and what I say determines the way I act, and the way I act determines my habit, and my habit becomes my character, and my character becomes my destiny."
- b. Is it legal? If it is not, do not do it.
- c. Is it safe? If it is not, do not do it.
- d. Is it the right action to do? If it is not, do not do it.
- e. Will this stand the test of public opinion and scrutiny? If it will not, do not do it.
- f. If something tragic or terrible were to happen, could I defend my actions? If you cannot, do not do it.
- g. Is it just, balanced, and fair? If it is not, do not do it.
- h. How will it make me think and feel about myself? If it is lousy, miserable, sad, or any other negative feeling, do not do it.
- i. Does this choice lead to the greatest good for the greatest number?

The worst sins in the Bible are timeless warnings. They show us how easily the human heart can wander, how much our free will may falter, and how much we need God's guidance and grace. If we humble ourselves, admit our failings, and lean on His grace, even the darkest sins can be overcome. The Bible speaks clearly about sin, but not all sins carry the same

culpability. Certain offenses stand out as particularly destructive – not just because of their negative consequences, but because of how they damage our relationship with God and weaken the fabric of our communities. These sins are not always as obvious as murder or adultery; some creep in quietly through pride, envy, or careless words. Recognizing them is the first step in avoiding them, and overcoming them requires humility, repentance, and God’s grace. As the covenant God reminds us, “turn around and come as far as you are able, and I will come the rest of the way.”

Responsorial Psalm

[Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34](#)

R. (1b) Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.

Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Be good to your servant, that I may live
and keep your words.

Open my eyes, that I may consider
the wonders of your law.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.

Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.
R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Reading 2

[1 Corinthians 2:6-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

We speak a wisdom to those who are mature,
not a wisdom of this age,
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.

Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden,
which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,
and which none of the rulers of this age knew;
for, if they had known it,
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,*
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In this reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul encourages us to pray that the Holy Spirit blesses us with spiritual discernment in difficult, confused, and complex ethical situations and dilemmas. Existing laws, which are shaped by various cultural traditions, can serve as helpful guidelines for understanding ethical behavior in different situations. Here are the classic

moral guidelines to determine whether we are responsible for our decisions when making them.

1. If we are **aware** that an action is wrong and choose freely to do it anyway, we are fully culpable of the action. 2. If through no fault of our own **we are unaware that an action is wrong** when we perform it, we are not morally culpable. 3. If some person or circumstance **forces us** to do something wrong against our will, we are not morally culpable. And 4. If we **lack the mental capacity to determine that an action is wrong** at the time we perform it, we are not morally culpable. Keep in mind that diminished culpability does not lessen the wrongness of the act. A wrong act remains wrong even if the person has no moral responsibility for performing it.

In addition, Paul's wisdom illumines the path of our faith life. It may help us to make ethical decisions as well. Paul realizes that it is the heady, intellectual Corinthians who distort the wisdom of God with their false concerns and philosophical hair-splitting. Let us return to the wisdom of our spiritual journey of faith, hope, and love.

Alleluia

[cf. Matthew 11:25](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;
you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

[Matthew 5:17-37](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

**"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.
I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.**

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter
will pass from the law,
until all things have taken place.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments
and teaches others to do so
will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

**But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments
will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you,
whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment;
and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,'
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin;
and whoever says, 'You fool,'
will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,

go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said,

You shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you,

everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.

And if your right hand causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

"It was also said,

Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.

But I say to you,

whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage is unlawful -
causes her to commit adultery,
and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors,

***Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.***

But I say to you, do not swear at all;

not by heaven, for it is God's throne;

nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;

nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

Do not swear by your head,

for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'
Anything more is from the evil one."

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In the Gospel, Matthew is building upon the foundation of the law proclaiming that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law. Like a laser beam the Gospel penetrates the essence and heart of the matter. The “NOT” is removed from the commandments as Jesus tightens the knot of Christianity by saying be the best person you can be in every situation. “The time is always right to do what is right.” – Martin Luther King, Jr. Search your heart, examine your conscience as to where the sins of pride, prejudice, position, and power lurk seeking to tear down and destroy the dignity and worth of human beings. It so happened that a man of color was dying of cancer, and a white person was in dire need of a new heart. The person of color, realizing his terminal condition, chose to donate his heart so the other man might live. The physician asked the white person if he would like to meet his donor. He was delighted and anxious to meet this most unusual and generous person. The doorbell rang, the door opened, and the person of color came face to face with the recipient of his heart. The handshake was firm and appreciative as the white person thought to himself, “Thank God! I

initially thought my heart donor was moving in next door!” Sin is an attitude of the heart, a reckless and rebellious spirit which flies in the face of God’s wisdom, love, mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness.

If we humble ourselves, admit our failings, and lean on His grace, even the darkest sins can be overcome. The question is, which of these sins do we struggle with the most, and what steps can we take today to make a change of heart? Here are some sins for your reflection and examination of conscience.

1. Pride – The Root of All Downfalls.

The Bible warns repeatedly that “pride goes before destruction” (Proverbs 16:18). Pride blinds us to our faults and makes us think we do not need God. It often appears in small ways – refusing to admit when we are wrong, boasting about our accomplishments, or looking down on others. The cure for pride is humility. Practicing gratitude and serving others helps us see that everything we have comes from God, not ourselves.

2. Lying – Destroying Trust One Word at a Time.

From the serpent in Eden to the warnings in Proverbs, lying is shown as a sin that God detests. Lies erode trust in relationships and can lead to devastating consequences. Whether it is a small “white lie” or a major deception, dishonesty separates us from the God who calls Himself “the Truth.” The path forward is choosing transparency, confessing when we have been dishonest, and letting honesty become part of our character.

3. Idolatry – Worshipping the Wrong Things.

The very first commandment was simple: “You shall have no other gods before me.” Yet idolatry is alive and well today. We may not bow to golden statues, but many bow to careers, money, technology, or even relationships. Anything that takes God’s rightful place becomes an idol. The antidote is re-centering our lives on God through prayer, Scripture, and putting Him first in every decision.

4. Envy – Poisoning the Heart.

Envy is more than wanting what someone else has – it is resenting them for it. James 3 warns that envy breeds disorder and “every evil practice.” Social media makes this sin particularly tempting, as people compare their lives to carefully filtered snapshots of others. Instead of resenting others’ blessings, the Bible urges us to “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Romans 12:15). Gratitude and contentment transform envy into joy.

5. Sowing Discord – Tearing Communities Apart.

Proverbs six says God detests the person who “stirs up conflict in the community.” Sowing discord is not just arguing – it is spreading gossip, creating drama, or driving wedges between people. It is one of the most destructive sins because it tears apart unity in families, churches, and workplaces. The Bible calls us instead to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Choosing reconciliation, listening well, and refusing to gossip helps build bridges instead of burning them. -Internet.

Final prayer: In freedom, loving Father, with your grace guide us to choose goodness not sinfulness, and morality not immorality. May your grace enlighten our hearts and minds to become informed, educated, and committed followers of Jesus. Amen.

Roger J. Vanden Busch – Blessings upon you and your loved ones.