

# Next stop? Map leads to Resurrection

**A**S FAMILIES GROW and become more involved it gets harder to get the members all together for an event. When everyone can finally come, we sometimes combine several celebrations into one. If there are two birthdays in the month of March, they might merit one party. Or we roll in a wedding anniversary with mother's day, or the graduation of one child with the first communion of another. Although convenience may force a single celebration, we're careful to honor the individual lives which cause the gathering to happen.

Easter resembles an overburdened family celebration. Not only do we celebrate the rising of Jesus but we also celebrate the baptism of new Christians. Lent similarly serves a double purpose. It creates the environment for the spiritual renewal of the elect (those catechumens chosen for Baptism this year), who in turn inspires the rest of us to our annual change of heart and renewal of commitment to Christ.

The third Sunday in Lent shows this double purpose. On that day we celebrate the first of three scrutinies for the elect. If you attend a Mass which includes that celebration next weekend, you'll hear the Gospel of the woman at the well (John 4:5-42). As she melts from a distant, icy skeptic into a warm, outgoing evangelist, she models one type of conversion to inspire those who seek Baptism.

**T**HE REGULARLY scheduled Gospel for this year will resound at Masses which do not include the rite of scrutiny. It emphasizes a different aspect of the season. It does not spotlight progress toward Baptism so much as it lights the way toward Easter. It reflects not on our conversion, but on the resurrection of Christ.

The main reason we hear next Sunday's Gospel (John 2:13-25) in Lent is this confident, nearly cocky boast from Jesus: "Destroy this temple, and

in three days I will raise it up."

The context is the cleansing of the temple. John places this episode at the beginning of his Gospel; the others locate it near the end, after Jesus enters Jerusalem, where it becomes an immediate reason for his arrest. At Passover time, Jesus found cattle, sheep, and doves in the temple, and sales clerks seated at tables. His reaction is a variation on the rage you feel when your favorite television show gets interrupted by your least favorite commercial. But the stakes are higher. This is the temple. God's house. So Jesus' anger drives him to a violent display. John says Jesus made a whip of cords and drove people and animals out of the temple, spilling the coins and upsetting the tables. This is not your pastel-laughing-cuddly-let-the-children-come-into-me Jesus. This guy would scare the living day-lights out of you.

**T**HE PEOPLE ASK for a sign. Basically, they're asking, "Who do you think you are? What gives you the right to do this?"

That's when Jesus makes his prediction: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Of course they misunderstand. Misunderstanding runs through John's Gospel like oil through Brush Creek. But who can blame them? Standing in the temple, they think he's referring to the building. John tells us Jesus is referring to the temple of his body. When they ask for his authority, he responds, "Resurrection."

Although the weekday readings in the first half of Lent focus on our interior journey of prayer, fasting, and charity, the Gospel for next Sunday reminds us of our destination. It momentarily pulls us over to the side of the road to check the map. Resurrection. Ah, yes. That's where we're headed.

Jesus feared not the destruction of his body. Neither should the Christian. So much of life seems fragile: our possessions, our relationships, our health. Any of them can be destroyed. But Lent holds out the promise of resurrection. No matter what is taken away from us, Christ can replenish us with glory. □

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Fr. Paul Turner



the Good News

God's word in everyday living

## Daily Scripture Readings

### Second Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 23

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Psalms 116:10, 15-19

Romans 8:31b-34

Mark 9:2-10

### Monday, February 24

Daniel 9:4b-10

Psalms 79:8-9, 11-13

Luke 6:36-38

### Tuesday, February 25

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20

Psalms 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23

Matthew 23:1-12

### Wednesday, February 26

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalms 31:5-6, 14-16

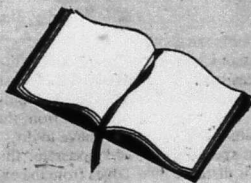
Matthew 20:17-28

### Thursday, February 27

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalms 11:1-4, 6

Luke 16:19-31



### Friday, February 28

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28

Psalms 105:16-21

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

### Saturday, March 1

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

Psalms 103:1-4, 9-12

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

### Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 2

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalms 19:8-11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25