

Jesus remained faithful despite tests

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

*...if you want to identify me,
ask me not where I live,
or what I like to eat,
or how I comb my hair,
but ask me what I am living for,
in detail,
and ask me what I think
is keeping me from living fully
for the thing I want to live for*
— Thomas Merton

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When I came across these words of Thomas Merton late last week they meant a lot to me.

Merton's words extended my meditation of the Gospel of the previous Sunday, namely the temptation of Jesus in the desert. In the desert, and throughout his life, Jesus searched for the best ways to live and love. He sifted through the allure of security, power and prestige and decided that they were illusory — ultimately unsatisfying unless they were rooted in an intimate, faithful relationship with the God he called his father.

Following that experience he rose in the synagogue at Capernaum, read from the book of Isaiah and identified himself with the poor, the brokenhearted and the captive. In other words, he identified himself with all that is weak, vulnerable and broken



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LONG THE WAY

within us. That commitment of his life and love — first made public in the synagogue — came to fullness in the events we'll celebrate during Holy Week.

But between Capernaum and Gethsemane was a spiritual journey through which our loving brother Jesus was deeply tested and through which he grew.

Jesus experienced the unrealistic expectations of his townsfolk and their hostility when he did not meet those expectations. He knew opposition of some of the religious leaders of the community. Sometimes the opposition came from honest disagreement. At other times, it was born of jealousy and fear of displacement from places of prestige. The fear and hatred of his antagonists was

no more intense than when he peeled away layers of human interpretations to lay bare the heart and deepest spirit of God's law. Fear and hatred are easily enkindled when we sense that we are losing control, when our security is threatened.

If all that weren't enough to test his spirit, he also had to endure the stubbornness and selfishness of those he had trusted most with the inner workings of his own spirit. It had to be painful when that happened. Is it ever easy to be misunderstood by those whose understanding we most deeply cherish?

But through it all, with the kind of patient endurance to which we are all called by St. Paul, Jesus remained faithful to us in our weakness, vulnerability and brokenness. He never quit on anybody; he'll never quit on us.

The simple truth is that Jesus endured what we endured and more. Yet he remained constant in his love and made it possible for us — with the grace of God — to prevail finally over all that would drag us down.

Because he became like us, he can be our way, our truth and our life. It is with that sure knowledge that we can go back to Merton's reflection and make his questions our own.

What am I living for?

What keeps me from living fully the thing I want to live for?

Peace to all.

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CENACLE OFFERS SPECIAL EVENTS

April 3-5 YOUR GOLDEN SHADOW — This retreat will focus on using your shadow and inferior function in prayer. We will explore how our struggles in life can become prayer. Conducted by Fr. Jim Schwartz and Sr. Arline Brent, r.c.

April 9 LENTEN EVENING OF PRAYER — Fr. John Walchurs, S.J., will conduct this special time of prayer from 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

April 10-12 PALM SUNDAY RETREAT — Internationally known retreat director and author, Fr. John Walchurs, S.J., will conduct this retreat.

April 16 HOLY THURSDAY — Mass of the Lords' Supper, followed by Festive Dinner and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

April 17 GOOD FRIDAY — Morning of prayer, simple lunch, The Three Hours, Liturgy of the Day (Thursday overnight and meals). We welcome ALL to any portion of this time of prayer.

April 24-26 MID-LIFE JOURNEY FOR WOMEN: Journey of Discovery and trust. Women journeying through mid-life encounter times of transition on many levels - spiritual, psychological, physical and social. Their journeys are filled with discovery and opportunities for change. Such journeys require trust and hope. This retreat experience of presentations, sharing and prayer is designed to explore ways of choosing when to hold on and when to let go of the many challenges to the journey. It is a time of deeper awareness of personal strengths and developing healthy connections. Presented by Carolyn Jacobs, Ph. D.

April 27 THE ADDICTIVE PROCESS — MAUREEN HICKEY LERCH, RN., BSN., will conduct this evening program defining the process of addiction and identifying the addictive societies in which we live. 7:00-9:00 PM.



All events are open to men and women of all faiths

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