

## GOSPEL REFLECTIONS

**FEBRUARY 21, 2010 -- LUKE 4:1-13**

Dr. Edward Sri

One lesson we can learn from this account is the priority Jesus gives to Sacred Scripture in his life. Each time the devil makes his suggestion, Jesus unsheathes “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). When he was tempted to break his fast, for example, he quotes part of Deuteronomy 8:3, which says “Man shall not live by bread alone, but ... by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” In doing so, Jesus reminds us of God’s priorities for our life, teaching us that physical needs are not our greatest needs. Food, shelter, successful careers, health, and financial security can each be a great blessing. But without God at the center of our lives, they do not satisfy our deepest hunger, which is for God. Jesus’ example reminds us that feeding on the word of the Lord—and truly living according to it—is a more essential sustenance for life than bread.



Ary Scheffer, *All the Kingdoms of the World*, 1854

**FEBRUARY 28, 2010 -- LUKE 9:28-36**

Dr. Edward Sri

Luke notes that this dramatic scene of the Transfiguration takes place just eight days after Jesus announced to his disciples his imminent death in Jerusalem (9:18-28). Soon they will see Jesus betrayed, beaten, stripped, and nailed to a cross. But before they face that trial of faith, Jesus shows three of them—Peter, James and John—his glory, so that when they witness his suffering and humiliation, they might remember that he is the Messiah, the glorified Son of God.

## ABOUT THE AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE

The mission of the Augustine Institute is to provide graduate students a coherent and unified instruction in Scripture, Catholic doctrine and history, as well as the pedagogical and leadership skills to impart the same to others. Under the patronage of St. Augustine of Hippo and in imitation of St. Thomas Aquinas, the patron of teachers and common doctors, the instructors and students of the Institute endeavor to place themselves under God’s grace for the purpose of being formed in memory, intellect and will, into effective instruments for the renewal of Catholic culture by a union of faith and life in the New Evangelization. The whole of this task is undertaken in a spirit of filial obedience to the pastors of the Church and in full submission to the Magisterium.

The Augustine Institute exists to equip people to play their part in what John Paul II called “the new evangelization” that responds to a new situation in which formerly Christian cultures have lost their Christian roots. People who may even call themselves Christians have “accepted a secular model of thinking and living” and “live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.” In fact, “entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith.” To respond to this modern crisis, John Paul II called for an evangelization that is “new in ardor, methods and expression.” The Augustine Institute’s unique curriculum meets the unique needs of our time by blending study of Scripture and theology with analysis of the current culture and the practical skills necessary to help students to present the timeless Gospel of Jesus Christ in a timely way to people.



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cover image: Pedro Orrente, *The Entry Into Jerusalem*, c. 1520



A Series of Gospel Reflections  
for the Sunday Readings of Lent  
by the Professors of the  
AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE

The Byzantine Catholic liturgy expresses this point in a prayer for the Feast of the Transfiguration: "You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable



Titian, *The Transfiguration*, 1560-65

### **MARCH 7, 2010 -- LUKE 13:1-9**

Dr. Jared Staudt

Two things stand out in this Gospel reading: the fallen state of humanity and God's redemption. Jesus uses both an historical event and a parable to draw out the relation between these two points. It is clear that there is something wrong in both narratives. In the first we see suffering and death. In the second we see the disappointment of a failed harvest. The two stories are united by the need for repentance.

The first story explains why this earthly life is one of difficulty, pain, and death. The Jews sought to link suffering to personal culpability, but Jesus rather shows that these destructive events flowed rather from the consequences of original sin. These physical evils should not be feared, but rather we should fear the spiritual death that comes from our sins. Secondly, we see redemption. We see the tree withholding fruit: humanity in its fallen state again. The tree deserves to be cut down. However, Christ, the cultivator of the soil of our souls, gives of Himself to provide us with God's mercy to lead us to repentance and redemption.

### **MARCH 14, 2010 -- LUKE 15:11-32**

Dr. Tim Gray

In the midst of our Lenten journey the Church presents us with one of the most cherished stories in Scripture, the story of the Prodigal Son. Woven into the heart of this dramatic story of

rejection and surprising acceptance is a father's love for his son. Undoubtedly, Jesus means to reveal to us that God is no abstract power that stands aloof from his creatures but rather a loving Father who is deeply involved in the fate of his children.

Sin, Jesus is saying, is ultimately a rejection of God's Fatherhood as we seek to find fulfillment, as the prodigal did, apart from God's ways. Sin obscures our identity as a beloved child and only by turning with humility and trust do we discover the mystery of the Father's mercy and love that he holds for each one of us. God, Jesus is showing us, is a Father who is running after us with open arms. We can find the Father's embrace this Lent in the wonderful sacrament of confession, where the Father awaits our return.

### **MARCH 21, 2010 -- JOHN 8:1-11**

Dr. Jared Staudt

In this Gospel, we see two types of people: those who come to Jesus to be taught and those who come to test Him. The crowd tests Him to see what He will do about someone else's sin. Will He be merciful or will He condemn? Many of us are secretly envious of God's mercy, because we want to see justice performed. We want the guilty to suffer for their sins. This can lead to self-righteousness as we compare our sins to others and find that others' sins seem to be more grievous.

It is interesting that even those who want to test Jesus are taught by Him. He reaches down to write on the ground for them, presumably to point out their sins. Jesus will rectify our consciences if we come to Him, even with impure motives. When He illumines us, we see that our own sins prohibit us from judging others. More importantly, when Jesus points out our sins we can turn to Him for mercy and healing, standing in the position of the woman caught in the act of adultery.

### **PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2010 -- LUKE 19:28-40**

Dr. Tim Gray

Riding on a donkey Jesus comes to Jerusalem, hailed by the crowd with palm branches, processions, and praise. Here is the long awaited return of the king. And yet the fickle crowds that acclaim him messiah today will turn on him by the end of the

background image: James Tissot, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 1886-94

week, crying out for his crucifixion. How can the crowds be so fickle?

Are we at all like the moody mob, whose opinion of Jesus shifts with his fortunes? Do we acclaim Jesus' kingship over us and then ignore his teaching and summons of costly discipleship? Do we have enough resolve and love to last beyond Palm Sunday through the difficult steps of the stations of the cross and the lonely climb up Calvary?

Seeing what Jesus suffers for us, let us resolve that during this Holy Week we will follow Jesus closely, with his mother Mary.

### **APRIL 4, 2010 -- JOHN 20:1-9**

Dr. Tim Gray

Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb in the darkness that precedes the dawn. She finds the stone that blocks the entrance rolled away and the tomb empty. This emptiness, however, does not signify the absence of the beloved or the loss of the loved one. No, the emptiness speaks rather of the emptiness of death and sin, which have been defeated and rolled back by the victory of Jesus.

The Gospel of John is telling us that the darkness of sin and death is now dispelled by the death and resurrection of Jesus. A new day is dawning, and as John began his story with the promise that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it", so now the empty tomb heralds that life has overcome death, and the light darkness.



William Bouguereau, *Three Marys at the Tomb*, 19th century