

Live as children of *light.*

Ephesians 5:8

*The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ;
When he comes, he will tell us everything."
Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one speaking with you."*

Like most of you, I have heard today's Gospel many times. The rhythms of this interaction feel very familiar - the woman, ashamed and isolated, slipping off to draw water in the heat of the day; the surprising encounter with a man who knows her heart and her life, but loves her deeply and promises her something better; the conversion that occurs before she returns to town, full of living water and ready to share the Good News. It's such a beautiful story of transformation, of what can happen when we are truly open to an encounter with Christ.

Today, though, as I read this story, a new detail drew my attention, a little piece of wisdom hidden in the conversation between the woman and Jesus. After an extended discussion about her life and Jesus's promise of living water, the woman seems to hesitate a bit, perhaps thinking, "Yes, yes, I get what you're saying - That's why I'm waiting for the Messiah. He's going to sort all this out, and then I'll have what I need." I can picture Jesus, listening carefully to her words, looking her straight in the eye with profound love and compassion, then slowly making this important declaration: "**I am he.**" In these three simple words, I hear a life-changing message: Jesus says to this woman, "I am the one you were waiting for. I am the answer you seek. I am what you need. You don't need to keep waiting and searching - I am he."

Sometimes, it feels like we spend so much of our life waiting - Waiting for the change that will finally give us peace or happiness or fulfillment. I'm certainly tempted to look ahead to some future time, when things will be better or easier or simpler. Maybe when my son is more independent with his homework... Maybe when I get past this stressful time at work... Maybe when my health gets better... Maybe when spring comes... It's so tempting to live our lives waiting, expecting some outside circumstance to change so that we can be truly happy.

For me, the message in today's Gospel is simple, but quite profound: Jesus says to me, to all of us - "**I am he.** I am what you are waiting for. I am right in front of you, and I am exactly what you need."

Questions to Ponder:

- In your own life, what do you find yourself waiting for?
- What difference would it make if, during this Lenten season, you decided to stop waiting for a change in external circumstances and instead looked for Jesus right where you are?

~ Sara Larson, Director of Family Ministry

Lenten Almsgiving

One of the primary commands we find in the Bible is to love our neighbor, recognizing them as our brothers and sisters. Too often we see people who don't look or sound like us as the other, and we don't treat them the same as we treat our friends and family. But we are called to kinship - a family relationship - with all people because we ARE in the same family: the family of Christ.

This Lent marks the start of what will surely be a wonderful, life-giving and solidarity-producing relationship. Our family of four parishes is entering into an intentional relationship with the family of four central city parishes – All Saints, St. Martin de Porres, St. Michael and St. Rose. This relationship can move us further towards healing the deep divide in our community, and – literally speaking – they are our neighbors. Who better to form a relationship with than the parishes next door?

As a first step in this relationship, our Lenten almsgiving will help support the All Saints Meal Program. Some of our parishioners are already involved in this important ministry, and we have an opportunity to help sustain this ministry by raising money that will allow All Saints to hire a Dining Room Coordinator who will oversee the three-dinners-per-week ministry. Many of our brothers and sisters in the central city are facing hunger and isolation, and the meal program at All Saints brings people together in community to meet their basic needs of food and human connection. With our support, the program can not only continue but also grow into an even stronger and more supportive ministry.

As you move through your Lenten journey, prayerfully consider supporting this great community resource, both through your prayers and your alms.

Lenten Day of Service – Saturday, April 1

Our lives are busy. It seems that we never have enough time to get everything done and have time leftover to do the activities that are fun and rejuvenating. There's always another meeting, another project and another commitment to fill our time.

During Lent, we are called to pray, fast and give alms. When it comes to fasting, many people choose to give up things like sweets, social media or alcohol. And while all of these are great (especially if you connect the difficulty of the fast to the difficulties that Jesus faced during his time on Earth), we'd like to challenge you to fast in a different way. Our family of parishes does a wonderful job of giving to the greater community, but there are many of us who haven't devoted time to these acts of service, these works of mercy. The challenge then is to fast from filling your calendar with "other stuff" and instead commit time to being present with and in service to those who are marginalized, oppressed and forgotten.

On Saturday, April 1, we will be joining together in a Lenten day of service. Several opportunities have been created so that you can meet a few more of your fellow parishioners, learn about new organizations and serve our brothers and sisters in the community. If you visit this website – <https://tinyurl.com/LentenDayofService2017> – you can read about a dozen different options for service. There are opportunities for all interests, energy-levels and skills, and a number of the opportunities are family-friendly.

Challenge yourself this Lent to fast from indifference and commit to compassion.

Please contact Andrew Musgrave, Director of Social Justice, for any questions about either of these Lenten opportunities: 414.271.6577 or musgravea@archmil.org.

