

The Knucklehead Gospels



A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

By
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Sponsored by
Kolbe Prison Ministries
Spiritual Retreat Foundation
St Pius X Prison Ministry



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Foreword

I was ordained a permanent deacon in the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, Texas in 2004, but I was introduced to prison ministry in the fall of 2000, working as a volunteer at a Kairos retreat at the Lynaugh Unit in Ft Stockton, Texas. From my first visit to the prison, I knew this is where God called me to serve. Many people have no knowledge of or experience with the prison system, so they have a great misconception of the individuals who reside behind those walls. Some may think that people in prison have no value and don't deserve a second chance. I can firmly attest that in ministering to our incarcerated brothers and sisters, I have witnessed the power of God working through many of these blessed and gifted humans. It has been transformational for me and has helped me to deepen my relationship with Christ. I am blessed to be able to call them my brothers and sisters.

I first met the author of this booklet in 2016 while serving in prison ministry for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. He along with a core group of devoted Catholic men, are in the maximum-security prison. They have each had a profound experience at a Kolbe Catholic retreat and decided to dedicate their lives to Christ: praying, studying, and working tirelessly to be better men and to inspire their fellow inmates to do the same. I soon realized that Arnulfo, a self-confessed Knucklehead, had the talent, the faith, the experience, and the humility to help others who were incarcerated find a way to walk in God's light in this dark place. Like a sponge, he worked to absorb all he could learn from other Catholic volunteers and ministers to be able to deepen his own spirituality and to help his brothers find theirs. His honesty and his consistency in his walk led both the men inside and the outside volunteers to trust and respect him. Whether it is teaching a lesson in faith-based Life Skills, or writing a reflection on Scripture, his message is creative, relatable, clear, thought-provoking, and inspired. I am blessed to have the privilege of working in ministry with him and was delighted to hear he had felt called to begin this series of reflections.

Last fall, The Knucklehead Gospels (TKG) for Advent 2020 offered reflections to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. These reflections began on the first Sunday of Advent, and included Christmas, and the Church feasts of the Holy Family, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and the Epiphany of the Lord.

Lent begins this year with the celebration of Ash Wednesday on February 17th. The Lenten Series of TKG includes reflections for the five Sundays of Lent followed by Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Each of these focus on Sunday Scripture readings and addresses one of the Seven Deadly Sins and how to overcome them. In addition, there are daily journal reflections with ideas on how to conquer these sins by putting on the Armor of God. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

Lent is a time to repent of our sins and return to the Lord. When ashes are put on our forehead on Ash Wednesday, the priest says, “**Repent and believe in the Gospel**” (Mark 1:15) or “**Remember - thou art dust and to dust thou shall return!**” Repentance comes from a Greek word ‘metanoia’, which means a change of mind and heart. Our behavior reveals our thinking, and in any situation, we have two options – to react or to respond; responding requires forethought and can be achieved with practice and looking within. When Jesus said to repent and believe in the Gospel, He was saying to demonstrate your belief in Him through actions of repentance. During the 40 days of Lent, TKG reflections can be a tool to assist in spiritual transformation to get your life in order and help you prepare for life both in and out of prison.

For those incarcerated this is a great opportunity to reflect on your past and make plans to change. God’s Word teaches us that it is in expressing faith and obedience in Jesus that He affords us the gift of salvation (Romans 10-9-10). There is no better time than the present, this Lent, to begin a new journey leading to eternal life with Our Father in heaven.

In 1 Cor 7:29, St. Paul says, “**I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.**” So PLEASE don’t ‘procrastinate’ but act now and devour the TKG Lenten Series material.

What do you have to lose?

Deacon Bob Leibrecht

Director of Criminal Justice Ministry
Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas

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Note from the Author

Brothers and Sisters, incarcerated and free,

Thank you for sharing time with our Lord through these pages. Jesus had been calling me to do this work for several years now, but the request didn't make sense to me at the time. I'm not a traditional Bible-thumper in any sense of the word. How could He expect me to write a book of Scripture reflections? I understand He uses the dumb to confound the wise; but even this was a stretch. I rejected the idea.

A spiritual desert quickly evolved before my eyes when the prison system locked down due to COVID 19. I saw brothers from different faith communities struggle in ways I had never seen. Jesus called me again. This time I sat and reflected.

I'm not a scholar or theologian, but I have taught some classes and I am a certified Knucklehead. I thought about presenting things in a way that men and women in jail and prison can relate. And, about how we did not become knuckleheads in prison; we entered that way. I began to see how others could get something out of these reflections from the comfort of their bedroom or on street corner as well.

The result was TKG Advent 2020. From the onset, I grumbled because I didn't know what I was doing, where to start, what angle to take, nothing! I complained, "You are going have to take the lead God because I am going to screw it up!" I knew Jesus sent the Holy Spirit as a guide when ideas started forming in my mind. First, came the main theme: Preparing your heart for the love of Christ. Then came the reflections and images to the Sunday Readings – the bus, the sufferer, the coach, the mountain. Finally, Daily Journal Reflections based on 1 Corinthians 13.

Am I mad? Plum loco? Maybe, but it worked! It worked so well that we are here for another round at Lent. The reflections are based on Sunday Scripture readings from the Catholic Church, Cycle B. All Scripture passages are from the *Holy Bible: Good News Translation, Catholic Edition American Bible Society 1992*, and follow copyright requirements.

I thank God for granting me the opportunity to be a part of TKG. I am grateful for the support and assistance I received from my beautiful Leticia and Jerry, Larry, Clair, Robert, Kathleen, John, Chris G., Deacon Bob, Kolbe Prison Ministries, Spiritual Retreat Foundation and St Pius X Prison Ministry. Without them TKG would be gathering dust along with other project ideas that never left the ground.

And thank you, the reader; many of whom expressed they enjoyed The Knucklehead Gospels. TKG Lent 2021 was written for men and women, incarcerated and free alike, but for simplicity sake, the setting is in prison, and characters are masculine (he/his/him/etc.) unless the reference is specifically feminine.

I pray that God continues to bless you with His love, peace, and abundance.

OOO-G Knucklehead and Brother in Christ,

Arnulfo

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INTRODUCTION

by Arnulfo D. Ayala

Imagine you are a candy apple red Corvette designed to reach 180 mph. Although you can reach that speed in seconds, maximum speed limits exist to prevent you from doing so when the urge sets in. It is the same with sin. You are able to act out anger, sloth, lust, greed, gluttony, envy and pride shooting out of the gate at 250 mph at will, but God gave limitations to help protect us from harm like maximum speed limits protect us while on the road.

Life is full of limitations, dos, and don'ts. Most of us are in prison or in a miserable place in our lives because we practiced more dos than don'ts. Even those in the free world can receive help from this book. We started out where you are standing. We broke the same speed limits you are breaking today. The difference is that you have not been caught.

We do not want you to wind up in prison or jail. We hope that TKG will motivate you to slow down a bit. Take it from someone who lost everything, the risks you are taking are not worth it.

God does not set limitations, or speed limits, to enslave us. God's limitations are to maximize our life experience. Think of it as a motor that will burn out if you run it too hard or seize up if it is not run enough. Somewhere in the middle is a sweet spot that will give the motor a good, long life. We should all want a good, long life.

In this edition of TKG Lent 2021, we will explore ways of overcoming the Seven Deadly Sins: Anger, Sloth, Lust, Greed, Gluttony, Envy and Pride. All sin has a deadly sin at its foundation. We all can reach dangerous speeds the roads these sins lay out for us. Once we choose a sinful road, exiting this path is very difficult. It is here that we become enslaved to our sins. We become so lost and aimless that there is a real risk of prison or death.

TKG Lent 2021 offers a tool to help you take back control of your life. Be the captain of your ship and follow the star that will lead you to a wonderful life. A better life is there for the taking. Many complain they do not know what a good life looks like. They see a good life as a work of fiction, so far-fetched that there is no use thinking about it, much less wanting it. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A good life is simple; it is not bad. Every good life is unique to the one living it. You need to focus on building the tools that will protect you from negative influences and actions, with an openness to positive influences and actions. Choosing a good life is a choice and a life-long process. There is no better guide than the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit: God. God is where all good things come from and all bad things end.

Let us begin.

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METHODOLOGY

The Knucklehead Gospels, A Simple Faith at Lent Reflections consists of seven reflections using Sunday Lenten Readings, (Catholic Church Lenten Season, Cycle B and Daily Journal Reflections about conquering the seven Deadly Sins. *Holy Bible: Good News Translation, Catholic Edition American Bible Society 1992*

First Sunday: Genesis 9:8-15; 1st Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15; and Psalm 25:4-9

Second Sunday: Genesis 9:8-15; 1st Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15; Psalm 25:4-9

Third Sunday: Exodus 20:1-17; 1 Corinthians 1:22-28; John 2:13-25; Psalm 19:8-11

Fourth Sunday: 2 Chronicles 36:14-17, 19-23; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21; Psalm 137:1-6

Fifth Sunday: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:8; John 12:20-33; Psalm 51:12

Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50:1-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1, 15:47; Psalms 22:2-9, 17-20, 23-24

Easter Sunday: Acts 10:34, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Sunday reflections include Daily Journal Reflections about conquering a Deadly Sin:

- Anger – First Week
- Sloth - Second Week
- Lust - Third Week
- Greed – Fourth Week
- Gluttony – Fifth Week
- Envy – Sixth Week, Palm Sunday
- Pride – Seventh Week, Easter

Daily journal reflections discuss conquering the Seven Deadly Sins with each of the components of the *Armor of God*. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. “

- Sunday – So Stand Ready
- Monday – Belt of Truth
- Tuesday – Breastplate of Righteousness
- Wednesday – Feet prepared with the Gospel of Peace
- Thursday – Shield of Faith
- Friday – Helmet of Salvation
- Saturday – Sword of the Spirit

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First Sunday In Lent

Overcoming the Sin of Anger

“With these words I make a covenant with you: I promise that never again will all living things be destroyed by a flood; never again will a flood destroy the earth.” (Gen. 9:11)

Anger is a result of pain, a pain most of us have experienced many times in our lives. How many times have you been deeply hurt or offended and have wished a flood would come and destroy the earth? Yes, I think many of us have been that angry. And who understood what we were going through at that time? God understands. He was not only offended enough to wish a flood to wipe the earth clean, He had the power to do it ... and did. Was it right?

“He was put to death physically, but made alive spiritually, and in his spiritual existence he went and preached to the imprisoned spirits. These were the spirits of those who had not obeyed God when he waited patiently during the days that Noah was building his boat.” (1 Pt 25:18-20)

There are many who try to justify actions done out of anger by comparing them to the flood and other Scripture passages that speak of God’s anger. We need to realize (as if I really need to explain this) that we are not like God. The relationship God has with us is very different than relationships we have with others. Our relationship with God is eternal; relationships we have with others are not. With an eternal relationship, God had a way to reconcile with those lost in the flood.

Reading the whole story in Scripture reveals that everyone outside of Noah’s family was living in sin and refused to listen to God’s correction. The flood may have been God’s way of saving them from being lost forever. After the flood, the spirits were taken to a safer place... a prison ... until Jesus reconciled by preaching to them. From there he freed them by taking them to heaven as He ascended to the Father. Even God’s anger holds a blessing. Ours does not. Why not?

Because most, if not all of us, would fail at using anger to a positive end. We are more likely to fall into a pit of hatred, stress, resentment, irreverence, malice, and paranoia. It brings out the worst in most of us because we don’t know how to respond in a way that reveals the best in us.

These emotional traps have to do with our insides; a lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, a feeling that we need other things (drugs, etc.) or people (gangs or bad relationships) to feel complete. These are a few mighty spears the devil uses to pierce our heart and disrupt our peace. Any of these things can be a major issue in our life that cause us to be easily hurt or offended. The key to preventing an invasion of our peace is to work on how we respond to them.

“At once the Spirit made him go into the desert, where he stayed for forty days, being tempted by Satan. Wild animals were there also, but angels came and helped him.” (Mark 1:12)

The beautiful thing about the Season of Lent is that it helps us focus on our impurities. We are imitating Christ’s 40 days in the desert where he was tempted by Satan. This took a lot of self-reflection and discipline. These are practices that will help us respond to others better.

Reflecting on our anger will help us recognize the situations that trigger it. Once triggers are recognized and we can lay out a plan of *responding* instead of *reacting* to them. There is a big difference between the two. Responding is the ability to think things through before acting. Reacting does not include thinking; it’s a knee-jerk action. Respond=smart. React=stupid. Pretty simple. By responding, you control your anger; it doesn’t control you.

Another really big difference during this time in the desert is who stands by us. The angels accompanied Jesus during His spiritual battle and challenges brought by wild animals. Angels are wonderful to draw strength from. We, on the other hand, not only have angels, but the One who went before us, Jesus himself, to draw strength from in our spiritual battles and challenges brought by the wild animals lurking in our cell blocks. He knows what we're experiencing and how to overcome it.

“Teach me your ways, O Lord; make them known to me.” (Ps. 25:1)

We have discussed several differences in this reflection. The biggest and most important difference is living with Jesus vs. living without Him. How long have you lived in a world that has made you feel completely alone and misunderstood? The truth is that you're not alone and never will be. You have Jesus, His angels, brothers and sisters in His body, and the mighty cloud of witnesses to accompany you during your time in the desert.

The bottom line is that He will never leave you or give up on you. Don't give up on yourself. Pray that He will reveal Himself and help you come to know who He created you to be. Here's where you'll find true peace and not only be able to conquer your anger, but every other burden you have carried in your heart your whole life.

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Daily Journal Reflection – Week One, Sunday.

“So, stand ready...”

Here’s a knucklehead idea! **Be the captain of your ship** and recognize what you are up against. This means you are going to have to dig deep into yourself to find what triggers your anger.

Imagine that your life is a boat ride from New York to London; a straight line across the map. Anyone who has ever been on a boat knows that as soon as you set sail the winds, tides, and current are going to work to take you off course. Winds are the chaotic knuckleheads around you, the tides are emotions that flare up at the worst time, and currents are the negative influences who try to convince you that right is wrong and up is down. You must work against these challenges to reach your destination. This is *your* ship. Stand ready to control it or these challenges will end up controlling you.

This week we focus on the tide of anger. As Captain you must see the tide coming from miles away. The easiest way to spot it is to put a face on it. *Who* makes you angry? *What* does he do to make you angry? And, *why* does it make you angry? I will go first.

Who: Several men who live around my cubicle area anger me daily. *What*: They crank up their radio while I am asleep. *Why*: Because of my terrible hours, starting at 1:30 a.m., I get to bed early. So, when they crank their music my pride swells up because I feel they are testing me. This is what I will be up against this week and I pray to God that His armor will help me overcome it very soon!

Now it is your turn.

Who?
What?
Why?

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Daily Journal Reflections – Week One, Monday.

“...With *truth* as a belt tight around your waist...”

Here’s a knucklehead idea! The truth is “***If you cannot control your anger, you are as hopeless as a city without walls, open to attack.***” (*Proverbs 25:28*). How many of you picked on someone because you know he would get angry? On the flip side of the coin there are people who know how to push your buttons too. Can you reflect on how many times this has happened in your life? It is not a good feeling. The result of those experiences are complexes. I am very familiar with the *little man* complex.

Let me restate that anger is a result of pain. In my case, the truth is that I was raised near an Air Force Base where they maintained the massive C-5 Galaxy cargo plane. Day and night these giant aircrafts flew in and out of the base roaring so loud the house shook. And I slept like a baby. So why does a little music bother me?

In short, my little man complex leads me to believe that I am constantly being challenged or tested by others. I also have odd work hours that send me to bed by 5:00 p.m. Do you know what is going on in a maximum security prison at 5:00 p.m.? Everything! It is prime time for most everyone. But since I grew up by an Airforce Base the noise should not bother me as much as it does. Yet, the little man picked on as a kid rears up every so often. I suffer long, restless nights when I do not speak up.

You can see that I let my ship get tossed side to side, left to right, risking loss of control several times. Can you see how my complex was controlling my ship? Do you have a complex controlling your ship? How has it affected your life? If you do not believe you suffer from a complex, ask someone who will give you an honest opinion and record it in this journal today.

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Daily Journal Reflection – Week One, Tuesday

“...With RIGHTEOUSNESS as your breastplate...”

Here’s a knucklehead idea! **Righteousness means right choices.** Right-choice-ness! Hah! I like that.

“If you are sensible, you will control your temper. When someone wrongs you, it is a great virtue to ignore it.”

(Proverbs 19:11)

Whoa, ignore is a big word when we are dealing with pride issues, inferiority complexes, and childhood traumas that have haunted us throughout our lives. How can we ignore acts that trigger these negative reactions?

Let’s start by replacing *ignore* with *put things in perspective*. It is a practice I put into play with the annoying music issue that keeps me up at night. First, I have had to accept that I am the cause of my anger and you are the cause of yours. I turned to God and asked Him to help me deal with it. This will help you too. He helped me realize that the individuals are living life, just like I am living mine. Their life will include loud music whether I exist or not; whether I worked night or day; whether I like music or not; and whether I am awake or asleep (obviously). Their lives do not revolve around my life. In other words, they are not jamming to anger me. I am angry because they are jamming.

Putting things in a proper perspective helped me realize that they are not trying to offend me. So, the little man in me settled down. A good thing, now all I need to do is handle the loud noise. I figured if I could sleep peacefully living beside an air force base, surely, I can handle a little music. In short, I can *ignore* the problem, not because I’m weak or defeated, but because I choose to put things in perspective.

Are you willing to accept that you are the cause of your anger? Will you go to God and ask that He help you put things in the proper perspective so that you can overcome it?

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Daily Journal Reflection – Week One, Wednesday

“...And as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of PEACE.”

Here’s a knucklehead idea! ***“Hot tempers cause arguments, but patience brings peace.”*** (Proverbs 15:18). Patience is like a cold drink on a hot day. Who does not enjoy this?

After you put things in perspective you should have more peace in your heart than you did yesterday. Choose to smile a little more or spend the day doing something you enjoy without thinking someone is going to ruin it for you.

The *little man* in me had a difficult time with letting my guard down because the man with the complexes thought someone stood ready to trample him, but this was untrue. I can only be trampled if I allow it to happen. This understanding has brought strength to my peace.

Yes, the neighbors still blare their music, but with God’s help things slowly got better after I watched the movie, *The Accountant*. In the movie a young boy with autism experienced serious issues with bright lights and loud noises. His mother wanted to commit him to inpatient treatment, but the boy’s father refused. The father said, that if light and sound bothered him, he needed more of it, not less, to overcome it. This did help the boy overcome these issues. So, I decided to try sleeping with my earbuds blasting my own music. I still slept with blaring sound, but I was in control and that made all the difference. Now, no matter what my neighbors are doing I get a good night sleep and I am at peace.

The great *Saint Francis of Assisi* exhorted: “Preach the Gospel always, use words when necessary.” The truest way to announce the Good News of my newfound peace is in my daily interactions with the ones who offended me. My greetings and conversations prove my peace and that I am overcoming the sin of anger.

Concentrate on the simple act of smiling more with people who anger you. A genuine smile. How difficult will that be?

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Daily Journal Reflections – Week One, Thursday

“At all times carry FAITH as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the evil one.”

Here’s a knucklehead idea! ***A peaceful person is a tempting target for the devil***, especially if there is much misery around. Only God can give someone that much peace. The peace you experience will anger the evil one and make those around you uncomfortable because they are forced to realize the pit of misery they are trapped in. You know the old saying, “Misery loves company.”? It is only a matter of time before you are attacked by burning arrows. Raise your shield and do not let their attack get the best of you.

“If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin and do not stay angry all day. Don’t give the devil a chance.” (Ephesians 4:26-27)

The shield of faith holds God’s truth. You were not made to live in anger and misery, but in love and joy. There will be those who listen to the devil and shoot arrows at you. You will know them when you see them. Don’t give in and you will not only win the day, but also win them over to wanting the same peace you have. Then they will betray the evil one and strengthen your freedom.

“Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults; no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another and forgive one another as God has forgiven you through Christ.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

What challenges in your life put your peace at risk? What will it take from you to keep your peace?

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Daily Journal Reflection - Week One, Friday.

“...And accept SALVATION as a helmet...”

Here’s a knucklehead idea! **Your salvation is a reality.** Christ died for it. As a helmet, these truths protect your thoughts and actions from falling into the sin of anger. How so?

Have you ever been invited to a big party or important event and expected to have a miserable time? Of course not! You invest time to look good, smell good and feel good about yourself. So much so, that you even tell others so they can share the joy and excitement. Well, salvation is the biggest and most important party you will ever be invited to. Its joy and excitement are not only the truest and most genuine you can experience, but there is also a heck of an after party that lasts forever. That is, unless you fall into too much sin that you lose your invitation.

That is how salvation protects your thoughts and actions. The joy and excitement promised motivates you to do the right thing (right-choiceness) so that your salvation is secure.

“What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions, in worship of idols and witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, and ambitious. They separate into parties or groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these. I warn you now as I have before: those who do these will not possess the Kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

At any given time, we have several of these arrows piercing our heart. These are a few of the things that threaten our salvation. For many of us anger runs deeper into the heart than the others. Anger has a face, but so does forgiveness. Whenever you see the face, real or imagined, and you become angry, think of forgiveness. It is probably a hard thing to do now, but if you continue it will get easier. The real question is, are you willing?

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Daily Journal Reflection – Week One, Saturday.

“...And the WORD OF GOD as a sword which the Spirit gives you.”

Well, my trial by fire (music) has been put out. I can enjoy my days and nights without stress or anger and sleep well regardless of what goes on around my residence. I'm at peace and can focus on the good things in life, like writing these reflections. Here are a few verses from the Word of God that can strengthen your peace and overcome the sin of anger.

“But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Love - John 13:14-17, Galatians 5:13-15, 1st John 4:20-21

Joy - John 16:20-22, Luke 6:22-23, Ecc. 2:26

Peace - Job 22:21, Psalm 23:1-4, Luke 1:78-79

Patience - Psalm 37:7-9, Ecc. 7:8, Luke 8:15

Kindness - Matt. 25:35-37, Luke 6:34, Colossians 3:12

Goodness - Proverbs 11:3, Proverbs 13:2, Proverbs 14:11

Faithfulness - Psalm 31:23, Matt. 10:22, Matt. 25:14-30

Humility - Psalm 69:32-33, Proverbs 27:2, Matt. 20:26-28

Self-Control - Proverbs 4:20-27, Proverbs 12:14, Proverbs 3:18

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The Second Sunday in Lent

Overcoming the Sin of Sloth

"I make a vow by my name – the Lord is speaking – that I will richly bless you. Because you did this and did not keep back your only son from me." (Gen. 2:16)

In this reflection we are going to focus on one of the shades of sloth – Spiritual Laziness and the affects it may have in our lives. In doing so we need to keep several things in mind:

1. Sloth means laziness.
2. If allowed, the negative consequences to sloth will build into a cancer.
3. The opposite of sloth is *zeal*, "great energy and enthusiasm for a cause or aim." (Oxford Dictionary of English 3 ed).
4. An act against sloth is *sacrifice*.

Because we give *things we can see* a higher priority than *things we cannot see*, it is easy to put invisible things off until a later time. You know what I mean - getting distracted from praying, studying or fellowship by: the game, a nap, a conversation, a TV show, or meaty gossip. If you are in the world, your phone, tablet, and video games will do the trick. Anything that distracts you from drawing closer to God is a visible form of spiritual laziness and a sin against God because it separates you from God. Before you realize it, you are so far away from God that it seems like a lost cause trying to make your way back.

Let us jump back on your ship. Say that a tide of spiritual laziness comes upon you and it takes you a couple of degrees off course. In time, if left unchecked, those few degrees will take you so far from where you are supposed to be on the map that you begin to wonder, "How did I get here?" I think we have all asked ourselves that question. In a panic, most of us will attempt to steer the ship back to the original line and take up where we left off only to realize that it is not the same. The right thing to have done was to readjust the course from its present location. In other words, draw a new line to the destination from where you stand, no matter if in jail, prison, on the street or alone in your bedroom.

"In view of all this, what can I say? If God is for us, who can be against us? Certainly not God, who did not even keep back His own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us His Son – will He not also give us all things?" (Romans 8: 31-32)

The key to staying the course and reaching your destination is *vigilance*; standing guard against the gentle influences that can drive you off course. The key to vigilance is *sacrifice*. The two earlier Scripture passages present two sacrifices, one by a man (Abraham), the other by God. Both were great sacrifices for the love of another. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son for the love of God. God sacrificed His only Son for the love of us. Neither of them got off course. Both were vigilant against the tide of emotion that could have led to, "Eh, I'll do it later."

"As they came down from the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the son of man has risen from death." (Mark 9:9)

Even Christ, whose destination was an act of self-sacrifice was vigilant to the end. Nothing distracted Him. Imagine if He would have been stuck on a video game or sat around with the apostles more interested in talking about which Pharisee will make it to hell first, where would our salvation be?

The sacrifices in the earlier three Scriptures are the greatest anyone could do. Christ sacrificed himself because He loves us very much, yet we are unwilling to make little sacrifices for the love of Him. Why is this?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Sunday

“Stand Ready...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Get moving.** If you don’t, sloth will produce a hole on the side of your ship that will cause you to sink. Get up and get busy doing what you need to do to stay afloat.

Let us look at the one habit you can develop this week that will help you stand ready against the gentle winds that convince you to “do it later.”

I’ll admit that until recently I struggled with prayer and studying Scripture. I was content with living out basic Christian principles and attending Mass. Looking back, I can see that I was trying to build my ship without blueprints or even consulting with the One who designed it. That doesn’t make much sense. Only by God’s grace did my faith grow; but there was no nourishment. It was like building the shell of a ship and launching out to sea without a motor or crew!

Every living thing needs nourishment. A living faith is no different. Now I read Scripture and pray to God every morning. I’m grounded, fed and ready to take on the challenges of the day. These habits have enriched and nourished my life. Before we explore the habits that will help enrich and nourish yours, pray that God grants you the wisdom and understanding to determine what you are lacking. Is it prayer, study, fellowship, or evangelizing? Maybe God is calling you to something, but you are dragging your feet. Pray that God will paint a picture in your mind and take that first step; write it down.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Monday.

“...With the belt of TRUTH tight around your waist...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Find true north!** Most of us do not know where True North or True South lay. Nor true right or wrong. Nor true up or down. You get the picture? We are lost at sea with a vague idea of where we want to go and less of an idea of how to get there. Just look around and you will see it. Now look in the mirror. Do you see it?

I spent the first 38 years of my life drifting aimlessly at sea. The only truths were convenient lies needed to fill the moment. I was so sad and pathetic that I could not even bring myself to look in the mirror for many years - true story. It wasn’t until 2008 after giving my life to Christ that I ran headfirst into a wall of truth. I found True North in Jesus. The beauty behind True North is the wonderful journey toward it that lays within me. True North is within me. I can even see it in the mirror. It is within you too, but it takes effort. You need to get up and start moving, looking, poking, and prodding everywhere you can. And what is it that are you looking for? Wisdom, understanding and strength.

You need wisdom to know that you need action, understanding to know what action to take, and strength to get up and take the first step. Return to prayer and ask God to paint another picture in your mind of what action you need to take and write it down.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Tuesday.

“With *Righteousness* as your breastplate...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Right-choiceness**. Choose to remain active and build upon past successes, no matter how small they are. If all you do is wake up and say, “Thank you, Lord,” to start your day, then build on that: “Thank you, Lord, please guide me today and protect my family and friends from the evil in this world.” Then build on that the following day.

Laziness is a nasty habit that will cause hopelessness and despair because you find yourself too far off course and believe you do not have a chance to get back on track. You will appear lost. I have suffered too many forms of this habit. I am struggling with it as I write this. Self-doubt causes me to second guess myself and put things off until later. No one is immune to this sin, but everyone can overcome it. The fact that you are reading this is proof. I built upon little success to finally complete TKG Lent 2021.

What success can you build on today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Wednesday.

“...And as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of PEACE.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Don’t bite off more than you can chew.** Take slow, solid steps. Doing too much too fast may cause more harm than good. It’s like shooting out on thin ice rather than solid ground. The point is not to reach your destination in a hurry, but to get there in one piece.

Don’t burn your motor out. Find that sweet spot and place one foot in front of the other. I’ve been doing God’s work in my prison unit for over a decade. From all the knuckleheads I have encountered, there’s only one that flipped on a dime and transformed in a complete 180°. His name is Dennis and he was paroled several years ago. He continues serving our Lord through the Church in his home country of Honduras. So, believe that I’m not saying it is not possible to flip the script, it’s just very difficult and intimidating. It’s so intimidating that you can become discouraged from little failures that the fire will die, and laziness will set in. You will find more peace by making tiny acts of faith that will lead to bigger ones.

What little act of faith can you build on today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Thursday

“At all times carry FAITH as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the evil one.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **BELIEVE you will reach the destination.** You’ve heard the saying, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Well, after a very challenging two hundred miles into the journey, what would compel someone to continue when stopping and getting comfortable is easier than continuing? He not only has to believe that the destination is worth the trouble, but that he can reach it.

It is the same with your ship. Sometimes the winds, tides and currents will feel like they are going to overpower you. Tragedies, bullies, personal doubts, and other challenges will make you slow down, drift or settle for what you got. But you must stay the course.

Let’s say that you are having a difficult time figuring out how to build upon yesterday’s success. It is so difficult that if you are asked to build more, you will give up because you are breaking your head and getting frustrated. You want to stop and pick it up another time; don’t. If you’re truly stumped on how to build upon yesterday’s success, don’t stop moving. Just do the same thing you did yesterday and continue until the Holy Spirit helps you discover how you can build upon it. Move forward. This journey doesn’t only take faith in God, but in yourself as well.

How can you build upon yesterday’s success or describe what you may be struggling with? I mentioned in Tuesday’s journal reflection that I was suffering from self-doubt and that really slowed me down. I overcame that by sharing what little I did write with others; that gave me positive feed-back or helpful criticism. I was able to build upon these into what you’re reading today. Give it a try.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Friday.

“And accept SALVATION as a helmet...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Let the MORNING STAR be your guide.** Yesterday’s reflection focused on believing in yourself. Now we will talk about God’s faith in you. It’s like an architect who has faith that his building will stand; like a car designer has faith his car will drive; like a ship builder has faith his boat will float. God is your designer, and He has faith that you can and will reach your destination. He has installed all the gifts and talents you need to be successful.

Why does He have so much faith that you will reach your destination? Because He is the destination. He has given you everything to draw you to Himself. So today pray for His guidance, read Scripture, fellowship with brothers in the faith, worship, share Him with others or give your time, talent and treasure to activities that help others experience the love of Christ.

What will you do today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Two, Saturday

“...And the WORD of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***Sloth will ruin your life!***

“I walked through the fields and vineyards of a lazy, stupid person. They were full of thorn bushes and overgrown with weeds. The stone wall around them fell. I looked at this, thought about it, and learned a lesson from it: Go ahead and take your nap; go ahead and sleep. Fold your hands and rest awhile, but while you are asleep, poverty will attack you like an armed robber.” (Proverbs 24:30-34).

Reflect on the following Scripture passages:

Proverbs 6:6-11

Matthew 25:26

Proverbs 10:4-5, 26

Romans 12:11

Ecclesiastes 10:18

2 Thess. 3:10-12

Isaiah 56:10

Hebrews 6:12

Don’t be lazy about writing your journal entries! How will sloth slow you down from here on in?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Third Sunday of Lent

Overcoming the Sin of Lust

“God spoke, and these were his words: “I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves.” (Exodus 20:1-2)

In this week’s reflection, our Egypt is the sin of lust. How many are a slave to it? Be real, Knucklehead. I have been in prison for more than two decades. I have seen a lot of crazy things and have heard many of the wild stories about past experiences in the free world. I am sure you have too. Let’s explore how this sin breaks our spirit and causes us to lose the real sense of beauty our sensual passions were designed to be. Load that fiery Corvette on your ship and strap it down. We are going for a little ride.

Let’s be real. How many of us, incarcerated and free, masturbate? How many of us are married? How many enjoy soft porn or ‘crotch-watching’ those new TV shows or pictures in a magazine? How about hard-core porn on your laptop, or video of the month club subscription? How many of us are depressed because it has been a while since our last encounter? How many pay for services rendered? How many of us have cheated because our spouse or significant other doesn’t meet our wild expectations? How many of us daydream about cheating with the neighbor or a target at work?

Well, today’s culture promotes all these things. Lust is a dominant force in the wind, tide, and current of our lives. It is everywhere and affects everyone. Think about it. How many of us know a virgin over the age of 18? How about 17 or 16? How many become mothers at 16 or 17? How many are fathers? How many are single parents? How many children suffer from a broken family? How many children are not even given the opportunity to live because the mother is not prepared and chooses abortion? These are just a few examples that put a picture of someone you know in your mind, if not a reflection in the mirror.

Lust enslaves many of us, incarcerated and free alike. No one can escape its consequences; even powerful people have been taken to their knees in shame. It has ruined lives, destroyed marriages, broken homes, battered women, abandoned children, inflamed drug and alcohol abuse, spread disease and death, especially from abortion (3,000 babies a day).

Many of us can trace the cause of our incarceration to lust. And those in the free world can trace the cause of the turmoil in your life to lust. Lust is a fierce and powerful oppressor able to harness our thoughts and actions like the reins on a weak-minded donkey surviving on sugar cubes of poison. Daydreams consume our waking hours, promoting adventures into acts that strip our honor, integrity, dignity, and character. We become a glob of clay that lust molds into a fool. It’s empowered as we rot from the inside. How many of us are a slave to it?

“God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and he chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful.” (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Let’s return to the image of a baby, only because it is the weakest and most innocent example of lust’s destruction. Okay, picture a smiling baby, a vacuum, and a mulcher—you know, the kind that grinds up tree limbs. 3,000 times a day in this country, a baby is vacuumed out or chopped to bits to remove it from its mother—that is abortion. This is a deadly consequence of lust. But all some parents care about is getting their rocks off, unprepared to meet the reality of their mutual act in the life of their child. They choose to get rid of the problem by chopping him up and tossing him in the trash. Sad but true. Again, it happens.

There are real consequences to lust. It has taken some of us (especially me) many years to realize the damage this sin does to our lives. It’s dry rot that decays not only our ship, but our body and soul as well.

“There in the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and pigeon, and also money changers were sitting at their tables. My devotion to your house, O God burns in me like a fire.” (John 2:14, 17)

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Your house is HIS house, your ship HIS ship and it burns in Christ like fire. So, what does this mean? Be a man and think, Knucklehead. There are consequences to everything you do. We’ve explored the consequences to lust. Consider the consequences to honor, integrity, dignity, and character and weigh the difference. It is as clear as black and white, up and down, left and right, and good versus bad.

Does this mean that you will become a bore and a drag on those around you who want to put notches on their headboard or scale the social ladder? Sounds like it, right? But look at what has brought you to this point in your life. I’m here in prison with you. And whether your prison is real or imagined, we’re not here because we have it all together. No one does. It is easy to condemn good and holy things like marriage and family because that’s another curse promoted by today’s culture. Just look at current TV shows to realize it. But let me repeat four words – honor, integrity, dignity, and character. Are these four words that you want to run away from; want nothing to do with? If not, if you feel it is good to want these four words then step up to them and embrace the good things they have to offer.

Where do the consequences of lust fit in? They don’t, right? These are the negative things you’ll have to throw off your ship. Good things don’t mix with bad. These few good things won’t make you a boring goody-goody. It will make you a master of yourself and the captain of your ship. These good things will break your enslavement to lust and enrich your life.

The final and most important thing to consider is that all good things come from the same source of goodness – God. He is the guiding light. Keep your ship free of garbage and your eyes on the destination.

“Reverence for the Lord is good; it will continue forever. The judgements of the Lord are just; they are always fair. They are more desirable than the finest gold; they are sweeter than the purest honey. They give knowledge to me, your servant; I am rewarded for obeying them. (Psalm 19:9-11)

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflections – Week Three, Sunday

“So, stand ready...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***Master yourself*** or be a slave to the most powerful weapon the devil has at his disposal. Why it is so powerful? Because it feels good, like sweet poison.

Lust reveals a twisted hunger within us - a giant, dark hole in our soul. Some are deeper than others. Whether you are young or old, rich, or poor, lust corrupts good intentions, twists reality, and betrays commitments in its hunger to be filled from one act to the next.

It is so powerful that we are having to send reinforcements to help you overcome this sin. These are: *values, virtue, character, dignity, integrity, and honor*. Four of these we discussed previously, and we are adding two. They support the Armor of God in this journey of self-mastery. But first, let’s put a face on it!

1. Have your good intentions been corrupted, like a friendship gone too far; or wanting to help someone in need and ending up in bed; or delivered a product or service and then some, like the proverbial mailman?
2. Have you ever twisted reality by justifying sex with someone, knowing it was wrong, maybe even illegal?
3. Have you ever betrayed commitments to the one you love to gratify a sexual desire?
4. Have you ever daydreamed attempting one of these?

The only way you can overcome this sin is to be honest with yourself. Are you?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflections – Week Three, Monday.

“...With TRUTH as a belt tight around your waist...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **VALUES make you valuable.** Faith, Family, Friendship and Freedom (F⁴ Values) are a few truths God has written on your heart, mind and soul. Lust betrays these truths with promises of happiness and fulfillment outside of them.

Don’t sell yourself short by ditching F⁴ Values to fit in with a crowd that promotes lust for sex, money, and power. In the end, you will be used and discarded, become a means to an end, a slave to another master, feeling broken, alone, and empty.

“Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires (lust) for pleasure, which are constantly fighting within you. You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it. And when you ask, you do not receive it, because your motives are bad; you ask for things to use for your own pleasures. Unfaithful people!” (James 4:1-4)

What is the fight within you?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflections – Week Three, Tuesday

“...With RIGHTEOUSNESS as your breastplate.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Virtue** is a commitment to your *F⁴ Values*. It is the choice that strengthens your foundation whereupon a good, long, and happy life can be built. Virtue is a quality that sets moral standards to your journey. For example, Virtue commits you:

...In FAITH you are called to pray daily for God’s grace and guidance; to be patient, always searching for his blessings and to be thankful for them.

...In FAMILY, you are called to commit or prepare to commit to uphold your role in your family; honoring your mother and father; being loyal to your spouse and a good role model to your children.

...In FRIENDSHIP you are called to be honest and loyal to friends; encourage good things in their lives and discourage bad; help in time of need without expecting anything in return.

...In FREEDOM you are called to be self-possessed, self-controlled, and self-mastered. If you lack these, you do not enjoy true freedom.

What do these standards do to help you overcome lust? It sets boundaries and commitments that keep you on course to your destination. By falling to lust there is no way you will reach it. You will continue to be lost in its haze.

Faith, family, friendship, and freedom; which is the most difficult to commit to? Which is the most difficult?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflections – Week Three, Thursday

“At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrow shot by the evil one.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Dignity upholds your character** by overcoming challenging people and circumstances as you continue down the road. It assures your freedom by keeping you from bowing to the crowd but to stand tall in the fog of poverty and uncertainty. It allows you to shine a light in the darkness by keeping things in perspective and holding your cool. It gives you the foresight to put the top up on your Corvette to protect yourself from rain and hail as your name is being drug through the mud and gives you the strength to stay the course.

This is a powerful quality that not only depends on your faith in God, but also on your ability to make the right decisions. It’s self-mastery in practice, helping you overcome the sin of lust at will.

Consider who or what will cause you to “sell your soul (dignity) for that jelly roll (lust).” Will your faith keep you on the road or are you heading full speed to a dead end?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflections – Week Three, Friday

“...And accept SALVATION as a helmet...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is looking.*** It’s especially important when you’re driving in your car alone and get an urge to call on an old flame, pick up a hood rat for a good time or stop somewhere to watch porn and satisfy yourself.

“But we are tempted when we are drawn away and trapped by our evil desires (lusts). Then our evil desires conceive and give birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:14-15)

Integrity guards your salvation by strengthening your right-choiceness. What do you struggle with when no one is looking?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Overcoming the Sin of Greed

“The Lord, God of their ancestors, had continued to send prophets to warn his people, because he wanted to spare them and the temple. But they made fun of God’s messengers, ignoring his words and laughing at his prophets, until at last the Lord’s anger against his people was so great that there was no escape.”
(2 Chron. 36:15-16)

Reflecting on the topic of greed I realized I am a *real* knucklehead in a world of knuckleheads who do not know right from wrong, left from right, up from down (it’s an election year). We are like chickens without heads. The sad thing is that God has a history of sending people our way to show us what is true in life, but we are stuck on stupid: sitting in prison cells, real or imagined, filled with fear and anxiety, looking crazy. It is so bad in the free world that “happy rooms” are a real thing! The only happy room we experience in prison is the commissary line.

We are a fallen people that from birth do not know better. We live in a culture surrounded by things that draw us away from the truth.

Imagine a fish swimming in a pond of clear pristine water. Life is good, then a rock is thrown and hits the bottom of the pond and kicks up a cloud of silt. Then another rock does the same; then another. By the time you know it, the fish is swimming in a polluted cloud of muck. Will the fish be healthy? Of course not. The clear water is life as it was meant to be. The rock is sin. The fish is you. Now imagine a pond full of fish. And there you have the world we live in. So, what does this have to do with greed?

Well, swimming in this muck of life created through our sin, we became lost and in a constant state of need (food, shelter, etc.). Our fears and anxieties compel us to take, and take, all we can get before someone else, who is also out to get all he can, comes and takes it. “I’m gonna get mine because no one is gonna give it to me,” becomes a way of life.

Nothing is wrong with wanting to meet your needs. Greed is where your Corvette is stuck in high gear and continues to want more and more. It is a hunger that is never satisfied. The sin comes in when the material things become your god and you sell your soul, compromise every value, and sacrifice every relationship at its altar. Do you know someone who’s so tight you can’t get a soup or a dime without promising anything in return? I hope you are not looking in the mirror because that is greed in real time. Who can respect or admire that?

“But God’s mercy is so abundant, and his love so great that, while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience, he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God’s grace that you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:5)

God continues reaching out to us so that we can return to Him. Yet, there are many who continue to laugh, mock, and even condemn those bringing His message. They are stuck swimming in the muck. But they get upset when they realize that there are healthy fish swimming in the same filthy water. These fish are clean, active, and full of life unstained by the soupy water, as if living in a bubble.

Well, they are living in a bubble. That bubble is called God’s Grace and it is blessed upon those who heed His message. It protects them from the fears and anxieties caused by the mucky culture we live in. The other fish want the bubble but are too caught up in the muck. This leads to more fear, more anxiety and more want of material things. It’s a vicious downward cycle that can reverse if they but reach their hand out and embrace the message.

Jesus is the message. He is the living example. What did He have that He didn't want to give away? He even gave His life! He is God. Everything in creation belongs to Him, yet His greatest desire was to give it all to us, to you. This should bring you peace and comfort. If it does not you are still in the muck. Pray for God's grace so that you may gain understanding and wisdom to see through it to the truth in front of you.

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die and have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

To HAVE or to BE. Choices, choices. Those who let material things define them live without meaningful purpose, lost and aimless, desperately looking to be satisfied. Their only concern is to get more and more, focused more on their outer inventory than inner truth. What's that truth? That God sent His only Son so that we can BE one with Him and enjoy all the fruits in this world and the next.

“By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down, there we wept when we remembered Zion.” (Psalm 137:1)

The day will come when we are at the end of our lives shedding tears of joy for how we lived and where we are going, or tears of regret for how we lived and where we are going. Life is full of choices. We pray you are willing to share the joy.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Four, Monday

“...With TRUTH as a belt tight around your waist...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Greed corrupts values** by placing money, possessions, and power over relationships.

“For the love of money is the source of all kinds of evil. Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

When you value things over relationships every positive quality you have is trashed. Think about it, the only thing that makes values a positive quality is how they are expressed to *others*. If relationships hold no value, you are more likely to lie, cheat and steal to get what you want. Who wants to be around that? This ends with the broken heart since you find yourself sitting alone with your things, feeling misunderstood and a victim of “haters”. This will lead you to get even more things because they are your only sense of security and belonging. *Truth* helps you overcome this sin by increasing the value of relationships over things.

Paint a picture of who this *victim of haters* reminds you of. What does she/he value above relationships? Do you have any similar attachments that you value above your relationships? This realization is where your truth lies, and change begins.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Four, Tuesday

“...With RIGHTEOUSNESS as your breastplate...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***Greed disrupts virtue*** through the fear of being without, left out, or left behind.

*“This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn’t life more than food? And isn’t the worth more than clothes? Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your father in heaven takes care of them! Aren’t you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?
 (Matthew 6:25-27)*

Worry robs certainty from your faith and life causing you to make desperate choices. *Righteousness* is based on trust in God and faith in his promises.

“Don’t start worrying, ‘where will my food come from? Or my drink? Or my clothes?’ (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings. (Matthew 6:31-34)

Are you worried about being left without, left out, or left behind?

PAINT A PICTURE of righteousness by committing to a single act of faith and trust in God’s promise (Mat. 6:33) to help overcome this worry. What would that act be?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflections – Week Four, Wednesday

“...And as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of PEACE...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***Greed robs your peace by creating discontent*** and it break good character by twisting relationships for the gain of things not of love.

“From the inside of your heart come the evil ideas which lead you to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, be greedy, and do all sorts of evil things; deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride and folly – all these evil things come from inside you and make you unclean.” (Mark 7:21)

In the state of mind presented in the above scripture, do you believe someone can find peace and uphold good character?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Four, Thursday

“...At all times carry FAITH as a shield; for with it...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Greed corrodes your dignity** by allowing money, possessions, and power to define you. Who is a rich man if he is stripped of all his money and possessions? Who is a king if the people rebel and overthrow him? Take a penitentiary “baller” who gets caught up and is housed in ad-seg on a diet of food loaf and water. Who he is will be revealed. Dignity defined by who they are (positive qualities) not what they have.

Faith in God fortifies us and holds your dignity in a world desiring to enslave you. Again, material things are not bad things until they become your god and your faith rests in them to deliver happiness and contentment in your life.

Paint a picture: Which is your god: Jesus or the accumulation of money, possessions, and power?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Four Friday

“...And accept salvation as a helmet...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Integrity stands** when ... (you know the answer?)

“Whatever is hidden away will be brought into the open, and whatever is covered up will be found and brought into the light.” (Luke 8:17)

It is Jesus who will make it known. You can’t hide from God, Knucklehead. It is difficult staying on course and even more difficult when no one seems to be paying attention to us. But God is.

I was once offered contraband by a cellie. When I declined, he said, “Come on, no one is going to know about it!” “God will know,” was my only response. He is the only one that matters. Why? Because my salvation depends on Him, so does yours.

“Final judgement must wait until the Lord comes; he will bring to light the dark secrets and expose the hidden purposes of people’s minds. And then all will receive from God the praise they deserve.” (1 Cor. 4:5)

So, what are you plotting greedily in the dark right now that will offend God?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Four, Saturday

“...And the WORD of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you.”

Here's a Knucklehead Idea! **Honor stands for what is right and defends** against what is wrong.

“And he went on to say to them all, ‘Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because your true life is not made up of things you own, no matter how rich you may be.’” (Luke 12:15)

To “guard” against a wrong is to stand in honor. What greedy wrong can you guard yourself against today?

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom. Sell all your belongings and give the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease because no thief can get to them, and no moth can destroy them.

For your heart will always be where your riches are.” (Luke 12:32-34)

What can you invest in heaven today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Overcoming the Sin of Gluttony

There's a big difference between eating to live vs. living to eat. We will not get into the medical conditions such as obesity in this reflection. Rather, we will address the spiritual condition that feeds the habit of overindulgence. This is the parasite God finds offensive since we know what happens when we have too much of a good thing – someone is going to get sick.

“The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it in their hearts.” (Jeremiah 31:33)

The Season of Lent is an imitation of Christ's journey into the desert where He fasted and prayed for forty days. It was the eve of the New Covenant before He returned to Jerusalem to begin His ministry and ultimately be crucified.

Jesus knows hunger. During the forty days, Satan came to Him and taunted, “If you are God's Son, order these stones to turn into bread.” It was an attempt to distract Jesus from His mission. But His focus was on being one with the Father, a spiritual experience, not physical.

“But even though He was God's Son, He learned through His suffering to be obedient.” (Hebrews 5:8)

It took the mastery of self to keep Christ's focus. But hunger is hunger. Some of us would not have lasted one day, much less forty.

Imagine standing on the dark side of a two-way mirror. A loved one is on the other side. You can see her, but she can't see you. Sitting on the mirror's ledge are two clear plastic boxes. Each box holds a plate. One plate has a glorious slice of two-layered chocolate cake. The other plate has a big macadamia nut cookie with chunks of chocolate and coconut sprinkled on top. Your loved one hasn't eaten in days. You lean on a microphone and call out her name. She immediately recognizes your voice as you say, “I love you and want to spend the rest of my life with you. I know you haven't eaten in days and are very hungry. But you have a choice right now that will affect both of us. You can choose to eat the cake or the cookie. If you eat the cookie, you will be able to eat one cookie every day and live a long life which we can share. If you eat the cake, you can eat it and the cookie and will be able to eat everything you want, as much as you want, any time you want; but you will only live a few more years. I love you, but the choice is yours.” All you can do is hope she wants to spend the rest of her life with you.

Now, imagine yourself on the other side of the mirror facing the same choice between the cookie and the cake. Upon hearing the voice of the other person behind the mirror, you at once recognize it as the voice of the one who loves you most – It's Jesus. He wants to not only spend the rest of your life with you but all eternity. Eating the cake risks losing eternity and losing your life.

*“Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be where I am.
And my Father will honor anyone who serves me.” (John 12:26)*

The cake and the cookie represent a state of slavery vs. freedom. The slave is mastered by a hunger that is never fulfilled. It is a vicious habit that wants to consume large amounts of good things to the point of getting sick. There's a lack of self-control that allows us to fall into this slavery. Look at those of us incarcerated. We had no self-control, indulging in anything and everything, any time, with calls for seconds. Now we are controlled. We are told when to move, eat, sleep, work; even when to use the restroom. It is pathetic, really.

But not worse than those in the free world living in their own prison, subjected to their own slavery with not only food, but alcohol, drugs, sex, and fame as masters.

“Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.” (Psalm 51:12)

True freedom is not a license to do what you want, when you want, as much as you want. Remember the example of the motor that will burn out if you run it too hard? Everything has a sweet spot. Gluttony, the overindulgence of good things will sour everything. It will damage you physically and spiritually. Truth is that we all have habits, but are they excessive? Even if all you did was sit and read the Bible but never put it into practice, it would do you more harm than good. A master of self knows how to balance good things in life – find the sweet spot. Think about it before you want to load your red Corvette with all these good things and blast 180 mph. Master yourself or you will be mastered.

This week we will explore what Jesus says about balancing good things in your life through the application of the Armor of God. We pray that by the end you will have a sense of balance in your life and more control over the things that have controlled you for so many years.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Sunday

"So stand ready..."

Here's a Knucklehead idea! **Balance.** Gluttony is an experience of temporary fulfillment. The experience becomes God-like, as our thoughts and actions become centered on the next experience once the fulfillment subsides, like a drug induced high. For some it is food, others drink or sex, or shopping or thrills or celebration, etc. Like greed, gluttony abuses good things, and they turn bad. The key is to find a balance that enjoys a good thing without abusing it through overindulgence.

Is there something you overindulge in? I tend to overindulge in two good things: coffee and ideas. I have been known to drink up to 12 cups of coffee a day. I have stopped everything to drink a cup, even preparing a cup before Mass so it can be enjoyed immediately after. Yes, that is bad. And then there are ideas. There are several chapel volunteers who will testify to my hunger to produce and develop new ideas. I love the experience just as I am sure you love yours.

This week we will work at establishing a balance that will keep good things good. First, what do you overindulge in?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Monday

"...With TRUTH as a belt tight around your waist..."

Here's a Knucklehead idea! **Truth overcomes lies.** There's a hole in our soul that we try to fill with things that make us feel complete. The lie is that you need something to feel whole when the truth is that you need someone - Jesus.

Overcome the lie of needing things by saying *no* to the extras and taking in more of Jesus. The Church promotes a prayer called the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Try overindulging in the mercy of God. Try it or a comparable prayer today.

St. Faustina's Prayer for Sinners

O Jesus, eternal Truth, our Life, I call upon You and I beg Your mercy for poor sinners. O sweetest Heart of my Lord, full of pity and unfathomable mercy, I plead with You for poor sinners. O Most Sacred Heart, Fount of Mercy from which gush forth rays of inconceivable graces upon the entire human race, I beg of You light for poor sinners. O Jesus, be mindful of Your own bitter Passion and do not permit the loss of souls redeemed at so dear a price of Your most precious Blood. O Jesus, when I consider the great price of Your Blood, I rejoice at its immensity, for one drop alone would have been enough for the salvation of all sinners. Although sin is an abyss of wickedness and ingratitude, the price paid for us can never be equaled. Therefore, let every soul trust in the Passion of the Lord, and place its hope in His mercy. God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God's mercy will never be exhausted. Oh, what immense joy burns in my heart when I contemplate Your incomprehensible goodness, O Jesus! I desire to bring all sinners to Your feet that they may glorify Your mercy throughout endless ages (Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, 72).

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple of Lent/Faith 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Tuesday

"...With RIGHTEOUSNESS as your breastplate..."

Here's a Knucklehead idea! **Do not get distracted from your mission.** Are you surprised to learn that you have a mission? Yep, just by being here you are accepting the mission of transforming your life from a glutton for misery and emptiness to one of joy and fulfillment. BE CAREFUL. Satan uses lies to distract you from making the right choices to help carry out your mission.

Paint a picture: You eat more than your fill while your neighbor goes hungry. What's the right choice? Would it be sharing a part of your meal? Maybe inviting him to sit for a meal? Maybe giving him food to making his own meal?

What if you're the neighbor going hungry and have nothing to share other than the complaint of going to bed hungry? Don't be a glutton for misery. Share the same time you would've spent complaining by indulging instead in positive conversation with others. You can come up with an activity that will keep your mind from sinking to the gutter and bring a smile to your face. This will make you spiritually rich.

"Give to the poor and you will never be in need. If you close your eyes to the poor/ many people will curse you."
(Proverbs 28:27)

Be true to God by sharing your goodness and He will be true to you. What can you share today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Wednesday

"And as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of PEACE"

Here's a Knucklehead idea! **Self-Mastery brings peace.** How so? Because it brings certainty: Certainty of purpose; certainty of mission; certainty of destination. What is your purpose? What is your mission? What is your destination? It's not knowing these things that bring anxiety and inner conflict. What does this have to do with gluttony? Well, having peace will cause you to share the extras. It's here that you will begin to practice eating to live vs. living to eat. Keep in mind that God feeds those who feed others, enriches those that enrich others and empowers those who empower others.

*"Do not forget to do good and to help one another, because these are sacrifices that please God."
(Hebrews 13:16)*

How can you feed/enrich or empower someone today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Thursday

"At all times carry FAITH as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the evil one."

Here's a Knucklehead idea! **Look past the two-way mirror.** You know Jesus is there, but you don't see Him. All you can see are your flaws, insecurities, mistrust, and fear of people's harsh judgement. These negative things become your reality. But it's a false reality. You must look deeper into your reflection -- into that broken heart of yours — with the faith that Jesus is on the other side of the reflection, even though He cannot be seen.

"Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me." (John20:29)

Practice: looking past the two-way mirror. Follow His voice. What do you feel Him saying to you?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2001

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Friday

"And accept SALVATION as a helmet... "

Here's a Knucklehead idea! *Think about it:*

"Be careful not to let yourselves become occupied with too much feasting and drinking and with the worries of this life, or that Day may suddenly catch you like a trap. For it will come upon all people everywhere on earth. Be on watch and pray always that you will have the strength to go safely through all those things that will happen and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36)

Balance good things you can enjoy on earth with good things you can store in heaven. You are going to stand face to face with Jesus one day. Food, sex, money, power will mean nothing. But how you loved Him and loved others will.

What do you want waiting for you when you meet Jesus: the gifts you have stored in Heaven or the regret of showing up empty-handed? What's one thing you can store in heaven today?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Five, Saturday

"...And the WORD of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you."

Here's a Knucklehead idea!

"Never eat more honey than you need; too much may make you vomit. (Proverbs 25:16)

Life is that simple sometimes. Too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Balance - it will lengthen and strengthen your life and relationships because of a willingness to share your extras. Consider the alternative:

"Drunkards and gluttons will be reduced to poverty. If all you do is eat and sleep, you will soon be wearing rags." (Proverbs 23-21)

Yes, my friend, life can be that simple. What have you learned or what practice have you developed this week that will help you overcome the sin of gluttony?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Palm Sunday

Overcoming the Sin of Envy

An envious person is a unique puzzle with a missing piece believing that someone else's puzzle piece, either who they are or what they have in material or relationships, can fit in the empty space to make him complete.

"The Lord has given me understanding and I have not rebelled or turned away from it." (Isiah 50:5)

What good can come from envy? Admitting it reveals what we are missing within ourselves. We lack joy but see joy in others and want to take it for our own. It is a restlessness in our soul that drives us to plot in secret to take things that don't belong to us. The sad thing is that once we have what we spent so much energy to get, while potentially hurting others in the process, we continue to feel empty. I once read an example of something similar about a dog chasing a car. What does the dog do once it catches the car? With envy there is no true relief, no enjoyment to the prizes. Why? Because we are trying to put a square peg in a round hole. It is not your puzzle piece, Knucklehead. So, the restlessness continues, and we blindly chase another car.

The truth is that we are all incomplete puzzles. Envy, greed, and gluttony are twisted inspirations to fill a big hole in our restless soul. Envy is the excessive desire for good things that belong to someone else, making it a bad thing. Greed stores up an excess of good things, usually at the expense of others, making it a bad thing. And gluttony consumes an excessive number of good things (like cake), making it a bad thing.

You can fill your life with good things or fill it with bad things. Finding joy and contentment in your life is a good thing. Hating to see it in the lives of others is a bad thing.

"He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal to God." (Philippians 2:6)

Again, Jesus sets the example. He who had the nature of God did not try to remain equal with Him. The Son does not try to be the Father. Compare that to the Archangel Lucifer, who challenged God to be His equal. But he was just an angel. Jesus is one with the Father but knows and accepts his role as the Son. He never envied the Father's place, even when facing the pain of death. Do you think that having to sacrifice Himself, especially for selfish, wicked humans, could have been the perfect opportunity to rebel? What would you do?

Jesus did not rebel. In His prayer to the Father the night before His crucifixion He cried out, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from Me." But then Jesus submitted, "Yet not what I want, but what You want."

"The chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for a way to arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death." (Mark 14:1)

Consider the chief priests and teachers who envied Jesus' ability to draw people to Himself. A carpenter's son who had not the education or experience they had was putting them to shame. But did it have to be shame? If they listened to His words and found truth in them, and if people were celebrating this truth, then why not celebrate as well? It was because it wasn't coming from them.

Imagine someone you know who has something you want. Be real with yourself, Knucklehead. Is it something they have, like a locker full of commissary, a great job, all available appliances, up-to-date shoes,

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Sunday

“So, stand ready...”

Here's a Knucklehead Idea! **Find your missing puzzle piece.** What do you lack in life that you feel necessary to search for in the lives of others? This is what we will explore this week.

For today, think of something you're envious over in the life of someone else. I'll go first.

There are several offenders who have what you can call a 'magnetic personality'. They are the life of the party, even on the cell block on a regular day. Even guards call them for conversation. I am an introvert by nature. If I am not talking about God or ideas, I'm a real bore. And I often find myself thinking about how many people I could bring to God if I had that personality. This is my missing puzzle piece: personality.

What's yours?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Monday

“...With TRUTH as a belt tight around your waist...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***Dogs don’t chase parked cars.*** People need to be out and about to get attention. It’s this movement – the joy, contentment, peace, or love expressed in the life of another – that catches your eye like a cherry red Corvette driving up the street.

Sheryl Crow said it best in one of her songs: “It’s not having what you want, it’s wanting what you have.” That is a very powerful thought: to enjoy what you have. You can look around to see the good things you have in your life.

For me, I really can’t say I’m hurting in a material sense. Where I am lacking, as I noted yesterday is personality. Those who know me will certainly agree that I lack charisma. It’s something I envy and appreciate in others. But even though I am not the center of attention when I enter a room, I can write and develop ideas that attract people in ways others cannot. This is something that I highly value and nourish in my life.

What do you see that’s valuable in your life?

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A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Tuesday

“...With RIGHTEOUSNESS as your breastplate...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Don’t hate; congratulate, Knucklehead!** Practice righteousness by bringing yourself to appreciate what others have and feel genuine joy for them. It’s like being a football fan. How many times have you pictured yourself breaking tackles and beating the rest to the end zone; or envied the amount of money players make? You can’t down the field, but you sure can cheer them on. Especially if they are your pick on Fantasy Football!

In the same way, cheer for what you envy in others. It is something you will have to practice. But it’s a genuinely good thing to rejoice, aloud or silently in your heart, when someone proverbially makes a touchdown in their life.

I have learned to appreciate those with charisma and now seek them out when I want to draw people to a project I’m developing. I’ve grown comfortable being behind the scenes. I find joy in it now, only because I find peace in my place. But I help others find peace in theirs.

What can you appreciate in others that you wish you had yourself?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Wednesday

“...And as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of PEACE.”

Here's a Knucklehead Idea! **Peace comes with contentment.** Not only in wanting what you have but valuing it and sharing it with others. Decide what makes you unique. In my case, I'm an idea guy. Bring me a problem or challenge, I'll deliver a solution or strategy. Writing is a form of expressing my ideas. I have come to value this gift of creativity. It has also been nourished to the point that I willingly lift it to the service of God so it can be shared with others. There may be those who envy my gift as I envy things about others. But I am at peace and content with what I have so that I don't have to plot to take someone else's joy.

Whatever makes you unique, commit to nourishing it, offer it to God, and be willing to share it with others. Remember that true peace is not found outside of yourself in things other people have, it is found in you. Write about the one or several things that make you unique.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Thursday

“At all times carry FAITH as a shield; for with it you will put out all the burning arrows shot by the evil one...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! **Stay in your lane, Bro!** Lucifer tried to be something that he wasn’t, an angel tried to be God. He obviously didn’t accept his place and stayed true to it. Which will you be?

Start the process of understanding your lane and stop wanting to cross into someone else’s lane. It’s our hope that you have discovered what makes you unique and have started the process of appreciating what you have. Let’s take it a step further. Write a prayer in today’s journal entry asking God to strengthen your faith not only in Him but in yourself. You are a beautiful gift to the world. It takes work to really believe it. If it were easy to believe in ourselves, we would not envy others for what we lack in ourselves.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Friday

“And accept SALVATION as a helmet...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***You are the only person who can get you to heaven***, good things others have can’t. You should shift your focus from what others have to what you can do to get you to the destination. You have nourished your soul with good things this week, even considered offering your unique gift to God. Today think of how you can begin. Take a good look at your gift. How can your gift benefit others?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Six, Holy Week, Saturday

“...And the WORD of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea! ***“Where there is jealousy (envy) and selfishness, there is also disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is pure first; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it’s full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deed; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy.” (James 3:16-17)***

The above scripture passage describes two sides of a coin. It’s a coin you wear over your heart. Look deep down and reflect on which side of the coin you see evil or goodness.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

EASTER SUNDAY

Overcoming the Sin of Pride

Today we discuss the sin of pride. Not the good pride that comes with achievement or good work ethic, but bad pride. The pride that has you believe that you're better than everyone else, smarter than everyone else, or more able than anyone else.

"You know about Jesus of Nazareth and how God pours out on Him the Holy Spirit and power. He went everywhere, doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, for God was with Him."

(Acts 10:38)

What's so wrong with being confident in yourself and your abilities? Well, nothing as long as it is not boasting on a pile of spirits you have broken to get your point across.

Jesus didn't boast about Himself. He didn't have to show how others were lesser to reveal how He was greater. True, He met challenges that came to Him, mostly from the priests and teachers, but always with humility. He simply forced them to look in a mirror.

"Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her." (John 8:7)

Without proclaiming His divinity and forbidding the mob to stone an adulterous woman to death, He flipped the script and made them look at themselves. A mob of prideful men defeated by a clear show of humility.

"You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God. Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth."

(Colossians 3:1-2)

Do you feel that you're better than everyone else in a specific area in your life, like work, ability, or relationships? Do you boast in a way that hurts others? Is it necessary to stand on the broken spirit of others to beat your chest? Is this what you want to raise to Christ? If so, you may not get the attention or reaction hoped for. He may put you on your rear to gain a little humility. "How the Mighty has fallen."

It was pride that enflamed Lucifer's rebellion against God. God desires sons and daughters in His creation, that's us. Lucifer wanted slaves. "I will not serve!"

Pride destroyed him and a third of the angels in heaven, condemning them for all eternity. Their hearts were not set for the things in Heaven, but upon themselves. I wonder if they thumped their chests all the way to hell.

Back to you, instead of looking down on others just to show how much higher you are (like Lucifer), would you be willing to help lift others up to your level (like Jesus)? Pride can make a big hole that will sink your ship if you're not mindful of the fact that it drills its hole from the inside out.

"They still did not understand the Scripture which said that He must rise from death." (John 20:9)

Jesus provided yet another perfect example of self-sacrifice and dying to self. It is a hard idea to understand, much less accept as a way of living a good life. But it is true, because a good life is founded on love, and love requires the presence of others. Our relationship with God and others is what makes life worth

living. So, why do things that hurt and push people away? Instead of doing things to boast, you are willing to do things to help others and glorify God.

"I will not die; instead, I will live and proclaim what the Lord has done." (Psalm 118:17)

Using your God-given gifts to help others with humility is a way of dying to self because it is not for your glory, but for God's. Steer your ship to be fixed on the things of Heaven because in the end, nothing on earth that gives your personal glory or satisfaction will be carried with you through the Pearly Gates.

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Seven, Easter Octave, Monday

“...With TRUTH as a belt tight around your waist...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea!

*“Everything that belongs to the world – what sinful self-desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of – none of it comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever.”
(John 2:16-17)*

Live for forever because forever is real. Pride can’t get you there, but love, compassion, and humility can.

“At that time, the disciples came to Jesus, asking, ‘who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?’ So, Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, ‘I assure that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. (Matthew 18:1-4)

This is not to say act childish, but, like a child depends on His strength, don’t boast on your own, depend on His treasured graces, not the treasures of the world; depend on his love to uplift others, not hold them down. What is your definition of greatness?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Life at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Seven, Easter Octave, Tuesday

“...With *righteousness* as your breastplate...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea!

“Take my yoke and put it on you and learn from me because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. (Matthew 11:29)”

Boast in your weakness to share His greatness! Eh, so what does that mean? We are all creatures in the world, and He is God. He came down to live with us, love us, and teach us. God, in His humility came to us so that we can gain understanding of what is important in life. Money, possession, and power are not as important as love. Understanding this will give us peace and rest from the stress, anxiety, disappointment, and failure we experience in life.

What right choice can you make today to help you gain peace and rest?

The Knucklehead Gospels
A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Seven, Easter Octave, Wednesday

“And as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of PEACE.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea!

“Now, Job, make peace with God and stop treating him like an enemy; if you do, then he will bless you. Accept the teaching he gives; keep his words in your heart. Yes, you must humbly return to God and put an end to all the evil that is done in your house.” (Job 22:21-23)

Peace can be made through conflict. In our case, there is often an inner conflict in which we blame God or others. An act of humility is accepting responsibility for our actions. Once we do that, we can begin to clean out the crud we have in our heart.

It’s like cleaning a bowl, throw water and soap in it and crud will float to the top. Same is true as you begin to clean the bowl of your life. There may be a few things held deep down that will float up to the top and bring anger and resentment toward God or others. Don’t let it fester. Remember, you’re cleaning your bowl. Keep His words in your heart and get rid of the crud once and for all. You will be blessed for it.

Think about your current circumstances and decide whether anything causes you to hold anger or resentment toward God or others in your life. What are they?

The Knuckleheads Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Seven, Easter Octave, Thursday

“At all times carry FAITH as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the evil one.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea!

“Unfaithful people, don’t you know that to be the world’s friend means to be God’s enemy? If you want to be the world’s friend, you make yourself God’s enemy. Don’t think that there is no truth in the scripture that says, ‘The spirit that God placed in us is filled with fierce desires.’ But the grace that God gives is even stronger. As the scripture says, ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ So then submit yourself to God. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners! Purify your hearts, you hypocrites! Be sorrowful, cry, weep; change your laughter into crying, your joy to gloom! Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.” (James 4: 4-10)

Don’t be stubborn, Knucklehead. There are difficult to let go but how much sense does it make to hold on to something that is holding you down? Really, think about it, there is no doubt that you have successfully let some things go, or you wouldn’t have made it this far in the TKG journey. But there is something deep down that you are keeping there. Consider letting that go, too.

Why has it been so hard to let this issue go?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Easter/Lent 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Seven, Easter Octave, Friday

“...And accept SALVATION as a helmet...”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea!

“Jesus also told this parable to people who were sure of their goodness and despised everybody else. ‘Once there were two men who went up to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood apart by himself and prayed, ‘I thank you God, that I am not greedy, dishonest, or an adulterer, like everybody else. Thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there. I fast two days a week, and I give you one-tenth of all my income.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, ‘God, have pity on me a sinner!’ ‘I tell you’, said Jesus, ‘the tax collector and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great.’ (Luke 18:9-14)

Guard your heart because there’s a real danger in doing things for the sake of doing them and not for the sake of God. Thump your chest all you want. All you will gain are bruises.

I have helped lead the Catholic community in my prison unit for over a decade; building an impressive resume that I expected would leave the parole board just as impressed. For a good while my focus shifted from doing things for God’s sake to parole’s sake. God wasn’t impressed. The result: a five-year set-off. Ouch! It hurt, but I didn’t blame God. I am just living out the consequences of my crime.

What I’ve learned is that when it comes to intentions of the heart, give to God what is due to God and to Caesar what is due to Caesar. Don’t mix the two. Today I keep God at the forefront of my activity, even collaborating with Him on different things, like this book.

How will you keep him at the forefront of your thoughts and activities?

The Knucklehead Gospels

A Simple Faith at Lent/Easter 2021

Daily Journal Reflection – Week Seven, Easter Octave, Saturday

“...And the WORD OF God as the sword which the Spirit gives you.”

Here’s a Knucklehead Idea!

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then should wash one another’s feet. I have set the example for you, so that you will do what I have done for you. I’m telling you the truth: no slaves are greater than their master, and no messengers are greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know this truth how happy you will be if you put it into practice.” (John 13:14-17)

Follow His example. Jesus has set so many examples that we can follow to live a wonderful life. I have discovered this truth in prison and so have many others. Wherever you are in your life, today is a starting point. Choosing to follow Christ’s guiding light is a powerful event in your life. Make the readjustments needed to reach your destination. Stay focused and vigilant against influences that can steer you off course.

In this final journal entry, consider that you successfully passed through Lent, a season of drawing closer to Jesus by casting out many of the spiritual obstacles keeping you apart from Him. I pray that you have transformed yourself, at least a little, and find hope in working toward more transformation in the future. It is a life-long process. You can look back to see things you have taken off your shoulders the past seven weeks. What do you hope to cast off in the near future?

