

**Lent 2024**

**EXPLORING JOY**

**“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the JOY set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

**Hebrews 12:2**

***“These things have I spoken to you, that My JOY might remain in you, and that your JOY might be full.”***

***John 15:11***

***“Christianity spreads through the JOY of disciples who know that they are loved and saved.”***

***Pope Francis***

A Project of Written Reflections  
by  
RCHS English I Freshmen & RCHS Seniors

**VOLUME 10**

**Routt Catholic High School**  
Jacksonville, Illinois

***“Enter to Grow; Leave to Serve”***

## Exploring JOY

JOY. What a small word with deep meaning for Christians. We sing, “Joy to the World, the Lord is come.” In the Gospel of John, chapter 15, Jesus prays that His joy might be in us, and that our joy might overflow. Perhaps reflecting on joy does not fit with the more somber tone of Lent as we travel, once again, with Jesus to the cross. Yet, it was the JOY set before Him that Christ endured the cross as the Savior of the world (Hebrews 12:2).

Second to love in the listing of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, “Joy is more than a temporary happiness; joy is lasting and based in more than simply an emotional reaction to our circumstances...As followers of Christ, we rejoice, because in Him, we have redemption” (nationalshrine.org). Joy is a common theme in Jesus’ teachings; He wants us to have joy, enjoy, rejoice. Joy can “grow” in us when we keep an intimate relationship with Jesus, the source of all joy. As the Bible is filled with numerous references to joy and to rejoicing, actively listen to the Word of God presented in this booklet and the sincere reflections of the heart from our freshmen and senior students.

*This year’s Lenten booklet is presented in remembrance of Kelly Peters, Rachel Beeley, and their families. Kelly and Rachel knew and lived joy as loved and beloved children of God. Their families continue to teach us about joy, this deep and abiding fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, centered in our confidence and trust in God.*

May this 10<sup>th</sup> volume of this project for Lent 2024 lead you into more obedience, more forgiveness, more peace, more hope, more love, more joy. In the words of Pope Francis, “Christianity spreads through the joy of disciples who know that they are loved and saved.” May you know you “are loved and saved”.

**Prayer:** *Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read, we may hear with joy what you say to us each day and live with joy because of Your amazing grace. Amen.*

Janet Chipman, Instructor, Project Coordinator, NEHS Advisor

With sincere appreciation to our NEHS officers:

Jacee W., President; Bella E., Vice-President; Elsa C., Secretary;  
Clare M., Treasurer; Amanda L. and Kenlee M., Chapter Project Chairs.

Cover Design - Nolan K., class of 2024

## EXPLORING JOY

“JOY is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks, walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus: preaching, proclaiming Jesus, proclaiming JOY...” Pope Francis

### February 14: Ash Wednesday

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22-23**

Fruit needs light, water, and care to grow. Jesus is the “Light of the World”, the “Living Water”, and He cares for us. So if the “fruit of the Spirit” is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, we all need Jesus for these to “grow” in us. With Jesus in our life, we may live with joy.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, today and every day, fill us with the fruits of Your Spirit. Amen.*

Alyssa B., Class of 2027

### February 15: Thursday of the First Week of Lent

**You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with JOY in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand. Psalm 16:11**

Psalm 16, attributed to David, makes clear that God is the source and the reason we have joy. God’s plan is for us to enjoy life to its fullest. He gives us this plan to accomplish His goal for us in life.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, for Your grace and love, for Your plan of salvation for us, and for everything You do for us, hear our prayer of thanks. Amen.*

Anson B., Class of 2027

### February 16: Friday of the First Week of Lent

**“...for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the JOY of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10 (Nehemiah’s words to the people)**

Nehemiah encourages the people (and us) with these words: "...the joy of the Lord is your strength." This strength, I think, is both inward and outward, helping us to perform our duty to God. God forgives sins, so we celebrate with joy what God through Jesus Christ has done for us.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, Your joy for us and in us gives us strength. Please guide us throughout our life, and give us the strength to accomplish Your will. Amen.*

Jaylee C., Class of 2027

**February 17: Saturday of the First Week of Lent** – Senior Reflections

**Joy is rooted in who God is. God is...**

*God is the one who brings joy to the world; He gives us joy.* – Isaac L.

*God is all powerful and full of love; God is the definition of love.* – Nolan T.

*God is a loving father, our refuge, our strength, our savior.* – Elsa C.

*God is our Heavenly Father who is always there for us, who listens to us no matter the time or situation. God is present to love, to forgive.* – Preston M.

*God is the source of joy. He gives us all the opportunities and presents us with situations for joy to occur.* – Conrad C.

*God is the Alpha and the Omega. God is our Father and Protector, the one with the plan for our futures, and who will help us in our times of need.* – Yawo M.

*God is full of love, forgiveness, hope, and meaning.* – Claire M.

*God is our loving Father and Creator of life.* – Gavin A.

*God is Our Savior.* – Alex M.

*God is the guide for how we should act and view life. Joy can be found by following His will. – Walt C.*

**February 18: First Sunday of Lent**

“A Christian is one who is invited...to join in the feast, to the JOY of being saved, to the JOY of being redeemed, to the JOY of sharing live with Christ. This is a JOY! You are called to a party!” Pope Francis

**This week’s passages focus on JOY OF SALVATION.**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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**February 19: Monday of the First Week of Lent**

**When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for JOY. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises to her!” Luke 1:41-45**

Elizabeth finds joy in knowing that Mary will give birth to The Messiah, The Savior of the World. When the Holy Spirit reveals this to Elizabeth, even Elizabeth’s child in her womb – John the Baptist – “leaped for joy”. May we, like Elizabeth and John the Baptist, discover joy in our salvation.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to save us. Amen.*

Saydee C., Class of 2027

**February 20: Tuesday of the First Week of Lent**

**But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great JOY for all the people. Today in the town of David a savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11**

These words from the Gospel of Luke announce that the Messiah, the Lord, will cause great joy for all the people. We can sing, “Joy to the world, the Lord is come.” Mary had to accept that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God.

**Prayer:** *Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

Drake D., Class of 2027

**February 21: Second Wednesday of Lent**

**Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the JOY of Your salvation...” Psalm 51:10-12**

In this Psalm, David – grief-stricken – confesses his sin before God. Like David, we can ask God for His pureness and holiness. We can ask God to forgive us and to restore our joy – the joy of the salvation He freely gives to us.

**Prayer:** *Lord, I pray that all in need of restoration openly receive Your love and joy, that all souls receive Your gift of salvation. Amen.*

Cameron F., Class of 2027

**February 22: Thursday of the Second Week of Lent**

**...And those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting JOY will crown their heads. Gladness and JOY will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Isaiah 35:10**

**I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness. Isaiah 61:10**

Today's passages come from the book of Isaiah. Through Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, we receive a "robe of righteousness" through faith in God. Like clothing covers us, we are "covered" in His love, bringing forth joy. Someday there will be no sorrow, but everlasting joy.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, may we live our lives in ways that make You joyful. Someday we will see You and be filled with everlasting joy. Thank You. Amen.*

Lauren G., Class of 2027

**February 23: Friday of the Second Week of Lent**

**Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious JOY, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. I Peter 1:8-9**

The Apostle Peter says that though the people, to whom he writes this letter, have not seen Jesus, they believe in Him and are filled with joy because of their salvation because of Jesus. We, too, may be filled with joy because we have salvation because of Jesus. Jesus is always watching what I do and the decisions I make. I realize that the decisions I make, even on a small scale, matter.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, we give our thanks to You for being our Savior. Amen.*

Liam H., Class of 2027

**February 24: Saturday of the Second Week of Lent** – Senior Reflections

**Joy is...**

*Joy is knowing that our lives are tethered to something grander than anything we can imagine. – Walt C.*

*Joy is the knowledge that we are safe in God's loving embrace. Joy is the certainty we have in our identities as daughters and sons of God. – Amanda L.*

*Joy is the feeling that comes to a person when they do the right thing. – Dawson D.*

*Joy is perceived as a high, upbeat feeling, but joy goes deeper than that. As the old acronym goes: **J**esus, **O**thers, **Y**ourself. – Cade E.*

*Joy is being loved by God and knowing He will be there to pick you up when times go dark or rough. – Kenlee M.*

*Joy is peace and hope found in God. – Elsa C.*

**February 25: Second Sunday of Lent**

“Each encounter with Jesus fills us with JOY, with that deep JOY which only God can give.” Pope Francis

**This week's passages focus on JOY IN THE LORD.**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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**February 26: Monday of the Second Week of Lent**

**REJOICE IN THE LORD always. I will say it again: Rejoice!**  
**Philippians 4:4**

Paul's letter to the Philippians is often called a "joy letter". Paul knows about suffering; more importantly, Paul knows about God's joy – for us and in us. Rejoicing in the Lord is one thing every Christian should do. This short verse shows us that God wants us to praise Him because of the benefit to us. Praising Him is an important way to thank God. Ways to rejoice include praying, singing, reading the Bible, proclaiming God's love.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thanks be to You for giving us reason to praise You. Even when we are feeling down, You give us joy. Amen.*

Keagen L., Class of 2027

**February 27: Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent**

**May the God of hope fill you with all JOY and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13**

To me, this verse speaks of trusting in God, and when we do, joy and peace come. We can overflow with hope because the Holy Spirit has been given to us to help us live our lives now.

**Prayer:** *God, help us to know that You are always here, beside us. Give us Your hope, peace, and joy this day no matter what goes on. Amen.*

Avery L., Class of 2027

**February 28: Third Wednesday of Lent**

**The seventy-two returned with JOY, and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name.' He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I**

**have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’ Luke 10:17-20**

Earlier in the reading of Luke 10, Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples in pairs. Read the instructions and warnings Jesus gives to them. It was probably difficult. Yet, the seventy-two return with joy for the strength and power that God gave to them. Jesus reminds us that we should rejoice in our spot in heaven.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, for guiding us into the right path as we go to serve You, we give our thanks. Help us to remember that our true joy is with you – now and in heaven. Amen.*

Madi M., Class of 2027

### **February 29: Thursday of the Third Week of Lent**

**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and JOY in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. Romans 14:7**

In life, it is so easy to get caught up in a world of material wants. We must stay committed to loving God. When we give up the world for God, we are on fire for God. Serving Christ with peace and joy is pleasing to God.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, keep us focused on You and away from worldly distractions. Amen.*

Thomas M., Class of 2027

### **March 1: Friday of the Third Week of Lent**

**Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. Habakkuk 3:17-18**

As a society and even as individuals, we look at the bad side of situations and life itself. Whether we lost something, we got into an argument with someone we care for, or we’re simply just having a bad day, we tend to look at all the negative

things that are happening to us and forget about the good. We forget that no matter what, God will forever be on our side. We can rejoice in this.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help us to see that You are the light in our times of darkness. Amen.*

Esther M., Class of 2027

## March 2: Saturday of the Third Week of Lent - Senior Reflections

### **Joy comes when...**

*Joy comes when God knows we need it; He does something in our lives to let us know how loved and cared for we are. – Kinzie L.*

*Joy comes when I pray at night and know God is always listening, when you feel so much compassion that you know there is someone there for you at all times. Joy comes when – after all the hard times are over – you can look back how far your life has come.” – Kenlee M.*

*Joy comes when people work as a community...community comes when we share our talents with each other. This brings joy. Without each other, we cannot share this joy. – Cade E.*

*Joy comes when you trust and believe (the bigger cause). – Anna C.*

*Joy comes when we are around the people we love, and when we spend time with God. – Kennadi J.*

*Joy comes when you have a moment of peace. – Kellen C.*

*Joy comes when one does what is right, when we are with family and friends, when receiving and giving, when you are helped and you are helping. – Carter N.*

*Joy comes when I am with the people I love on at church. – Jack W.*

*Joy comes when you do good. When you help others, care for others. Joy comes when you don't expect it. Joy is one of the many gifts God gives us when we live the way He wants us to live. – Preston M.*

*Joy comes when you surround yourself with godly people and things. – Hallie M.*

**March 3: Third Sunday of Lent**

“If we are truly in love with Christ and if we sense how much He loves us, our heart will ‘light up’ with a JOY that spreads to everyone around us.” Pope Francis

**This week’s passages focus on GOD’S JOY IN US.**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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**March 4: Monday of the Third Week of Lent**

**The whole earth is filled with awe at Your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, You call forth songs of JOY. Psalm 65:8**

These words point us to the joy we find in creation. The morning sunrise, the setting sun. The changing seasons, the fields’ harvest. The creation of people.

We should live peacefully and remember that each creature has an important aspect in the world.

**Prayer:** *May we find joy in creation. Amen.*

Shaurya S., Class of 2027

### March 5: Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

**The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love He will no longer rebuke you, but will REJOICE over you with singing. Zephaniah 3:17**

We often think about how we have joy because of God, but do we ever think about how we, who are God's creation, can be joyful to Him?

**Prayer:** *Dear God, hear our prayer of thanksgiving for being with us and saving us. May we always follow your path and bring You joy. Amen.*

Gabbi V., Class of 2027

### March 6: Fourth Wednesday of Lent

**Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' So Jesus told them this parable: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more JOY in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Luke 15:1-7**

In Luke 15, there are three "lost and found" parables – one lost sheep out of 100, one lost coin out of 10, one lost son out of 2. While there are many lessons to learn from these parables of Jesus, there is great rejoicing – joy – when each is found. Jesus makes the point that when a person "finds" God, there is great joy in heaven, God's joy for each lost soul that is found. God has joy when we turn to Him.

**Prayer:** *Lord God of wonders, for Your grace and forgiveness, we give You thanks. We are grateful for the joy of our salvation. Amen.*

Rylee W., Class of 2027

**March 7: Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

**Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is JOY before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:8-10**

This is the second of the “lost and found” parables in Luke 15 that ends with joy and rejoicing. When looking for something small, we often ignore the larger and more important things. I realize that Jesus would go the extra mile for me – did go the extra mile for me.

**Prayer:** *O Lord, please guide us and help us grow in wisdom and joy. Amen.*

Reid W., Class of 2027

**March 8: Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

**It gave me great JOY when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. I have no greater JOY than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.  
3 John 1:3-4**

The Apostle John wrote this letter expressing joy for his friend and others who are keeping their faith in Jesus Christ. Whenever we live out our Christian faith, image the joy of Jesus when we walk in the truth of His love. I can make Jesus joyful by living my Christian faith.

**Prayer:** *God, please give us the strength to continue being strong in our faith. Have mercy on us sinners. Amen.*

Zander Y., Class of 2027

**March 9: Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent** – Senior Reflections

**Joy is not...**

*Joy is not something we should take for granted.* – Jack W.

*Joy is not obtained by sinful actions.* – Hallie M.

*Joy is not a feeling that is temporary, but has a lasting impact.* – Nolan T.

*Joy is not an option in the Catholic faith; it is essential to our relationship with God.* – Kennadi J.

*Joy is not something you should be faking or lying about.* – Bailey S.

*Joy is not the greedy pleasure we get in short, small doses.* – Isaac L.

**March 10: Fourth Sunday of Lent**

“JOY adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.”  
Pope Francis

**This week’s passages focus on JOY IN TRIALS.**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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March 11: Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

**Consider it pure JOY, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4**

James, a leader in the Jerusalem church, knows about trials, struggles, hardships. We don't want them, but we, too, will have trials, struggles, hardships. We are to grow mature in faith and perseverance. I know I need to persevere. I think knowing Jesus is always with us can bring us joy.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help us to have joy in our life and persevere through trials. Amen.*

Jonas B., Class of 2027

March 12: Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

**Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we REJOICE in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we REJOICE in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Romans 5:1-5**

For first-century Christians, there was much suffering. The Apostle Paul encouraged them and us today because we, too, have suffering. But we can have peace through faith in God which leads us to gain access to grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. We can learn from the suffering we have in our lives. We don't have to be ashamed of it. God will pour His love to us through the Holy Spirit no matter what or how we suffer.

**Prayer:** *Lord God, please keep bringing love and joy into our hearts. Amen.*

Jamie C., Class of 2027



March 13: Fifth Wednesday of Lent

I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my JOY knows no bound.

2 Corinthians 7:4

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing JOY and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2

Paul experienced much suffering as he helped to spread the Good News of Jesus. Even poor people in the Macedonian churches, through God's grace, gave generously and had joy "in the midst of a very severe trial". God gives us so much grace – even during rough moments.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help us to be generous and spread Your love and joy to people who need it. Amen.*

Evan C., Class of 2027

March 14: Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But REJOICE in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be OVERJOYED when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. I Peter 4:12-16

I feel that we fight to end our suffering, but Peter doesn't see suffering as a bad when we suffer for Christ. He distinguishes between suffering for being a believer and suffering for doing wrong things. I feel that we should double think our decisions; our choices matter.

**Prayer:** *God, give us strength and joy whenever we "participate in the sufferings of Christ" because we know Your glory will be revealed. Amen.*

Seth D., Class of 2027

### March 15: Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

**For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you, not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the JOY given by the Holy Spirit. I Thessalonians 1:4-6**

The Apostle Paul reminds us of being loved by God, and to joyfully obey and serve, even in the midst of suffering. To me, this means that even when I am suffering, God is still there for me and always will be until the end of time. I am very thankful that I always have God.

**Prayer:** *Thank You, God, for always making me feel heard and loved, no matter what the circumstance might be. You are always there for me through my darkest days and also through my best days. Amen.*

Reese E., Class of 2027

### March 16: Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent – Senior Reflections

#### **Joy comes when...**

*Joy comes when I pray, eat with my family, and when everyone is chilling. – Yawo M.*

*Joy comes when you accomplish something, when you succeed and win at a game or challenge, when you laugh and have fun with friends, or when you ace a test. – Conrad C.*

*Joy comes when you make a point to make someone's day better or easier. – Kayla B.*

*Joy comes when we do things that bring up a human being's spirit and truly are able to relieve any stresses in life and anything that causes distress. – Clare M.*

*Joy comes when we open our hearts to Christ and turn to follow His light. When we give our lives to Christ, we are immersed in joy, and see the grace and beauty of every day. – Bella E.*

*Joy comes when I'm dancing at my studio with my dance friends. – Jacee W.*

*Joy comes when someone is nice to another. – Carter L.*

*Joy comes when you live morally and be the best version of yourself. – Avery K.*

*Joy comes when I am not stressed. I feel joy when I am with people who care and love me. Joy comes when I am guided by God. – Alli K.*

*Joy comes when we trust God's plan for us and for our lives. Trust and belief in God are the first steps to true joy. – Amanda L.*

**March 17: Fifth Sunday of Lent**

**“Holiness does not mean performing extraordinary things, but carrying out daily things in an extraordinary way that is with love, JOY and faith.” Pope Francis**

**This week's passages focus on JOY IN SERVING.**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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**March 18: Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

**Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the JOY of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the JOY of your master.' Matthew 25:19-23**

God gives us many talents whether we know about them or not. The point is to use your talent for the good of the Lord. You should never try to deny your talents because they give you the option to live your best life. So use your talents for the Lord in joyful service to others.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, I hope that we are able to use our talents for You and others, experiencing joy. Amen.*

Camden F., Class of 2027

**March 19: Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

**Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be JOYFUL in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Romans 12:9-13**

These words from the Bible emphasize to love one another and don't engage in evil acts. Be there for one another and be faithful in what you do, serving God and enjoying life. God's love allows us to be "joyful in hope, patient in affliction..." and live generously.

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us to be faithful to You and serve You by serving others. Help us to be patient with others and ourselves, and find joy in Your plan for us. Amen.*

Joscelyn H., Class of 2027

### March 20: Sixth Wednesday of Lent

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my JOY complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! **Philippians 2:1-8**

The Apostle Paul in this letter encourages us to be united with Christ, to have humility, to serve others with love. Living in this way brings joy to God, others, and ourselves.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, help me to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ, who became a servant and humbled Himself. Amen.*

Olivia H., Class of 2027

### March 21: Thursday of the Sixth Week of Lent

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him JOYFULLY. And when they saw it, they all murmured, 'He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' And Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house...' **Matthew 19:1-9**

Even though Zacchaeus was a sinful tax collector, Jesus came to him and changed him. Zacchaeus was considered a sinner among the town, but Jesus accepted

him with open arms, showing that no matter our sin, Jesus will still love us. He wants to put us on the right path; He wants us to joyfully receive Him and serve Him by serving others with generosity and compassion.

**Prayer:** *Jesus, thanks be to you for always loving and accepting us into Your heart. Amen*

Elizabeth K., Class of 2027

**March 22: Friday of the Sixth Week of Lent**

**Make a JOYFUL noise to the Lord, all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing! Know that the Lord is God! It is He that made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him, bless His name! For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100**

The psalmist reminds me to approach God with an open heart and mind, a joyful heart and mind. I'm reminded to be grateful for all that I have. God is always with me, through thick and thin. Knowing we are His helps me to trust in God and His plan.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, watch over us and keep us safe. Help us to trust in You and Your plan. Amen.*

Lexi L., Class of 2027

**March 23: Saturday of the Sixth Week of Lent – Senior Reflections**

**Joy is...**

*Joy is what you feel when you put others above yourself.* – Kayla B.

*Joy is the feeling of happiness that truly lifts the soul and any weight off of chests.* – Clare M.

*Joy is seeing the good in every day, every person, and every situation. By seeing joy in every situation, we open our hearts, minds, and eyes to the Lord.*  
– Bella E.

*Joy is following Christ’s word and living a Holy, Christian life.* – Avery K.

*Joy is feeling grateful for the people and things God places in our lives for reasons we may have expressed to Him in prayer.* – Kinzie L.

**March 24: Palm Sunday**

“The cross of Christ, embraced with love, never brings sadness with it, but JOY, the JOY of being saved...” Pope Francis

**This week’s passages focus on JOY passages during Holy Week, an especially meaningful time of remembrance and opportunity for spiritual renewal.**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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**March 25: Monday of Holy Week**

**Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’ They replied, ‘The Lord needs it.’ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As He went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When He came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began JOYFULLY to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “Blessed is the king who**

**comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' 'I tell you,' Jesus replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'**  
**Luke 19:32-40**

These verses show how amazing and powerful our Lord is. On Palm Sunday, there was great joy when Jesus entered Jerusalem. But Jesus knew and we know, looking back, that He is soon to be crucified. May our rejoicing be honest and sincere.

**Prayer:** *We praise You for being our sacrifice. Amen.*

Peyton L., Class of 2022

### March 26: Tuesday of Holy Week

**As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My JOY may be in you and that your JOY may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:9-12**

God has loved us through every sin that we have committed. He wants us to repay Him by loving others as He has loved us. He wants us to try our best to follow His commandments. We are to love others as ourselves so we may experience real joy in life.

**Prayer:** *Lord, I pray for everyone to be kind to one another. I pray for everyone to be filled with love and joy. Amen.*

Taegen R., Class of 2027

### March 27: Wednesday of Holy Week

**Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to JOY. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when the baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her JOY that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your JOY. John 16:20-22**



Jesus is about to suffer greatly; we cannot imagine it. He tells the disciples, “Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” Jesus knows joy is coming. We, too, will have grief in our lives, but we trust Him that joy will eventually come.

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us stay positive in times of suffering; help us know that joy is coming. Amen.*

Owen S., Class of 2027

### **March 28: Holy Thursday**

**John 17 is a prayer of Jesus to God, the Father.**

**I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of My JOY within them. I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. John 17:13-18**

The Holy Week narrative continues. In His prayer to the Father, Jesus asks God to protect His disciples. Jesus prays for the disciples to have His joy within them. He is speaking to us, too, as His followers today. Life is so short; may we bring as much joy into the world as we can.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, for praying for us and putting joy in our lives, we thank You. May we enjoy life, living with honesty and truth. Amen.*

Lake U., Class of 2027

### **March 29: Good Friday**

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM, HE ENDURED**

**THE CROSS, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3**

Today we remember Good Friday; today we remember Christ's sacrifice for us. I realize that we can get rid of all that prevents us from running the race of life, like sin and temptation, if we "fix our eyes on Jesus". Knowing the joy to come, Jesus endured the cross, fulfilling the race marked out for Him.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help us to ignore the distractions in our lives and only focus on You. Amen.*

Chase W., Class of 2027

### **March 30: Saturday of Holy Week**

**I will exalt You, Lord, for You lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. Lord my God, I called to You for help, and You healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; You spared me from going down to the pit. Sing the praises of the Lord, you His faithful people; praise His holy name. For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but JOY comes in the morning...**

**You turned my wailing into dancing; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with JOY, that my heart may sing Your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise You forever. Psalm 30:1-5,11-12**

Sometimes, one bad thing may stay for the night, but by the next morning, it will all be OK. The Holy Week narrative continues as the disciples wait and wonder. We imagine their grief, their bewilderment. This psalm, attributed to David, speaks of the joy to come in the morning. Tomorrow, we celebrate resurrection.

**Prayer:** *Even in the darkest times of our lives, may we trust in Your Presence to return our joy. Amen.*

Payton W., Class of 2027

### **March 31: EASTER – CHRIST IS RISEN!**

**He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these**

**things. I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'**

**When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into Heaven. Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great JOY. Luke 24:46-52**

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

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**"Dear young people, Jesus wants to be your friend, and wants you to spread the JOY of this friendship everywhere." Pope Francis**

**"Dear young people, Jesus gives us life, life in abundance. If we are close to Him we will have JOY in our hearts and a smile on our face." Pope Francis**

**"If we wish to follow Christ closely, we cannot choose an easy, quiet life. It will be a demanding life, but full of JOY." Pope Francis**

**"Instead let us live for the Lord and base our life on love, as Jesus did: we will be able to savor authentic JOY, and our life will not be barren; it will be fruitful."  
Pope Francis**

**"The JOY of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded." Pope Francis**

**“Wherever there are men and women who have consecrated their lives to God, there you find JOY.” Pope Francis**

**“The Holy Spirit transforms and renews us, creates harmony and unity, and gives us courage and JOY for mission.” Pope Francis**