

# Re-turning

March 2007

All many of us know about Lent is that it is a somber season to be endured, not enjoyed. Those who grew up in the Catholic tradition associate it with sacrifice – giving up meat and special treats. Those of us who are clergy associate it with exhaustion – all those extra services!

Lent is indeed supposed to be a time of repentance in preparation for celebrating the Resurrection. But repentance does not need to mean mournful, depressing, self-flagellation. At its deepest, repentance means to turn – or better yet, to re-turn. Turn back from your sins. Turn back to where you started. Return to Christ. Return to following Jesus from wherever you may have wandered.

Lent can be a time of finding yourself when you have become lost. Lent ought to be a time to rediscover the Jesus you have become separated from because of everything else that happens in your life.

Jerry, Justin, and I have been having conversations about what the most important things about Jesus' ministry are. Jerry has carried the question to other colleagues he knows. I keep running across that question in my reading. If we were to boil down all of Jesus' teachings to the five most important things to understand, remember, and live by, what would they be? Our answers can be found in the column on the left hand side of this page [worship themes for March]. At every turn, we discovered that those central teachings pointed to a "counter-intuitive Christ," a Jesus who teaches us to live in ways that run counter to the world around us. This makes it all the more important for us to return to them, to make sure that we are shaped by the teachings, and that we have not shaped the teachings to be more comfortable for us.

We hope this Lent will be a time of re-grounding ourselves – and perhaps you – in what is most important. We hope it will be a time of returning – to Jesus, his teachings, his path. We hope this will be a chance to repent, to turn again and follow Jesus, all the way to the cross and beyond.

## **A Lenten Affirmation of Faith**

We have heard Jesus' call to "Turn and believe the Good News."  
So we are turning from the world's comfortable way,  
Toward Jesus' challenging way,  
Which seeks no the respectable, but the rejected,  
Which commands not compliance, but love,  
Which offers not reward, but discovery,  
Which urges not agreement, but action,  
And which blesses no save lives, but lives given away.  
We believe this is Good News.  
We are turning.  
We follow Jesus.