

Then he said,
"If anyone wants to
be a follower of mine,
let her renounce
herself and

#Lent
lettering
2 MAR 17

Take up her cross
EVERY DAY
and follow me."

Lk 9:23

catholiccalligrapher "Take up your cross every day
and follow me." Luke 9:23 🙏

I've always found Thursday's readings challenging, especially the Gospel. What does it mean to die to our families to follow Jesus? To die to our lives in order to live? First of all, that just seems harsh! And second, what does it mean?

I found myself coming back to the verse I lettered, specifically the words "every day." What if it's not just every day, but every hour, every moment, that we have the choice between bearing our cross or sticking with the comforts of life? And what if the message is about dying to our ATTACHMENTS in this life? Then it's about being compassionate and giving and loving - following Christ's example - without getting hung up on ourselves, our reputation, our worldly desires... and every day, every moment, we are given another invitation to try again.

Give me back
the joy of your
salvation, sustain
in me a generous spirit
Psalm 51:12

catholiccalligrapher "Give me back the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a generous spirit." Psalm 51:12 🙏

Oops, I've got out of order in posting! This was from Ash Wednesday's responsorial, and aside from being one of my favorite verses, I really think it sums up the day. Ash Wednesday, for me, is a day of reflection between the self-indulgence of Mardi Gras (which is really itself just everyday life turned up a few notches) and the self-denial of Lent. And in that pause, as we reflect on how we each will spend the season, it's important to remember that it's God who will sustain us, and that the point of all of it is preparing ourselves for the joy of the Resurrection. Side note: this post is what inspired this project. I had planned to go to Daily Mass every day during Lent, but I have been very sick and am immunosuppressed to begin with. So I decided that I would at least read each day's readings, and then picked up a marker, and here you go! It's only been a couple days, but I find myself reflecting more on the Scripture than I do even when I go to Mass sometimes, so my plan is to keep it up - definitely through Lent, but maybe longer!

Is not this the sort of
fast that pleases me:
To break unjust fetters,
To undo the thongs of the
yoke, To let the oppressed
go free, & To break all chains.
Isaiah 58:6 #Lenten
Lettering
@gabecky

catholiccalligrapher "Is not this the the kind of fast
that pleases me?" Isaiah 58:6 🙏

Yesterday was the first Friday off of Lent, and the readings focus on what fasting is and is for. Isaiah spends a lot of time chastising folks for what I might call "Facebook fasting" in our culture - fasting loudly, publicly, looking for attention, without changing any real behavior that pushes us out of our comfort zones and towards God. .

What I find so interesting is that when the prophet turns to what kind of fast Yahweh does want, the first line is all about social justice and freeing the oppressed... something that is all the more important for us to be mindful of in the current state of the world!

Fill your servant's
heart with joy, Lord,
for to you I raise
up my heart.

Ps 86:4
#LentLettering

catholiccalligrapher (Saturday) "Fill your servant's heart with joy, Lord, for to you I raise up my heart." Psalm 86:4 🙏

Part of the "Prayer of David," I just love the imagery in this verse. Like many people throughout time, I am awed by the heavens... the sheer bigness of a clear night sky makes me feel both the nearness and overwhelming otherness of the Sacred in a way that is hard to articulate. So I just love this simple prayer of lifting my heart to that power and asking it to be filled with joy!

He fasted for 40 days
and 40 nights, after which
he was hungry. And the
tester said to him, "If you
are Son of God, tell these
stones to turn to loaves."
Mt 4:2-3

catholiccalligrapher [First Sunday of Lent] "He fasted 40 days and 40 nights, and was hungry." 🙏

So the first Sunday of Lent is when we are reminded of what Lent is commemorating - yes, it's leading up to Easter, but it's also our way of marking Jesus's time in the wilderness and how he turned down the Tester (Satan) when tempted.

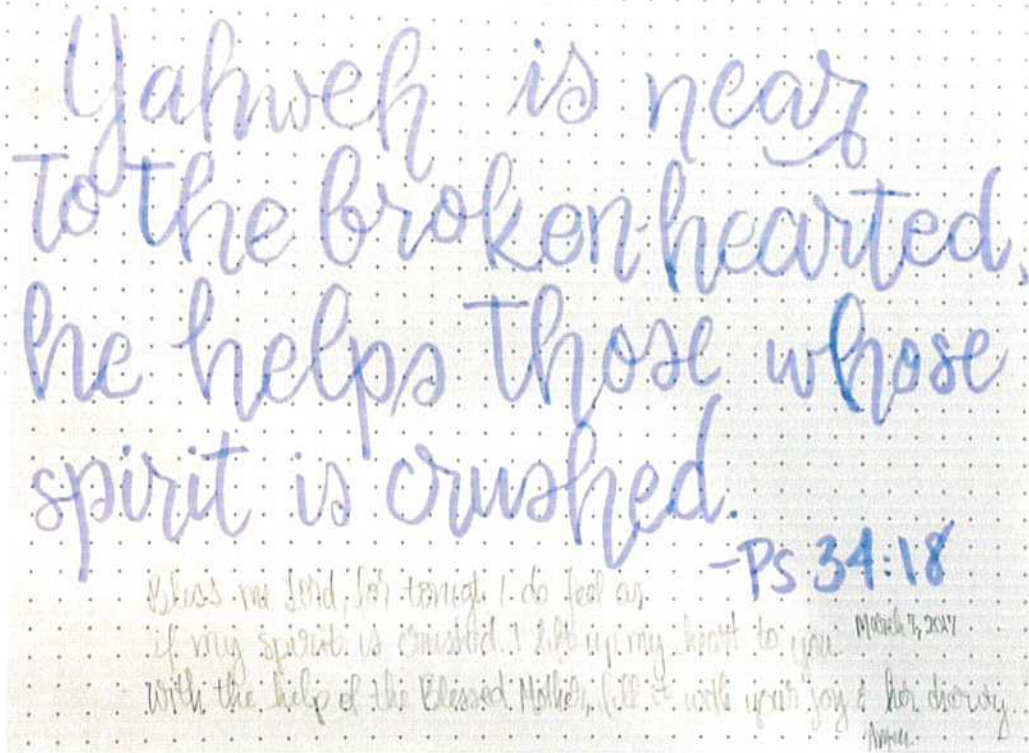
What really struck me, rereading this familiar story, is how the temptations didn't start with power over the entire world. Evil - whether in the person of the Tester, or simply those things that put space between ourselves and God - doesn't start big. It starts with the easy, small stuff, the completely human stuff. Obviously we know Jesus could've easily created food for himself at any point, but that's not why the Spirit led him, in his fully human body, into the wilderness. He was tested just as we are every day, especially during Lent when we are striving to resist whatever takes us away from God in our own lives. Taking shortcuts, justifying, speaking or behaving without patience, sneaking a cookie or bite of ice cream... these are the simple ways that we are tempted all the time. The gift of Lent is that our awareness is drawn to these temptations. And the gift of the Cross is that we are always forgiven when we do allow temptation to pull us from God. All that is asked is that we repent and, following Jesus's example in the desert, continue to resist and do whatever we need to do to rebuild our closeness to God.

The King will say,
"In truth I tell you,
whatsoever you did to
the least of these,
you did to me." Mt 25:40

catholiccalligrapher [Monday] "Whatever you have done for the least of these, you did for me." Matthew 25:40 🙏

This is the earliest Gospel reading I can remember being proclaimed as a child, and I think it had a profound impact on how I understood what it means to be a person of faith. Reflecting as I wrote, I thought it was interesting that Matthew refers to Jesus as "the King" in this parable. Of course we all would go out of our way to feed, clothe, visit in jail, etc someone as important as a king! It's always easier to serve when we aren't really going out of our way, pushing past our comfort zones, seeing an obvious reward for our generosity. But Jesus calls us to care for ALL of Creation, for all people, no matter how much it inconveniences us or feels scary or, quite frankly, whether we believe that those asking for our help really "deserve" it. That's the whole point, as far as I see it: the Spirit dwells in us all, and we are called to serve our brothers and sisters no matter how "other" they might seem. Because when we do, we are literally serving God, and when we fail, we are literally failing to see and serve God.

A quick prayer: God, as I go about my day today, grant that I should have the kindness of spirit, the patience, and the awareness to see You in everyone around me; to listen for your guidance in how to serve them; and the courage to do so. Amen. .



catholiccalligrapher [Tuesday] "Yahweh is near the broken hearted, he helps those whose spirit is crushed." Psalm 34:18 🙏 .

This was a really powerful prayer experience for me. I had a pretty creepy day Tuesday dealing with the insane bureaucracies of insurance companies and the government, and by the end of the day I really did feel broken hearted. So when I got out my notebook to do my daily scripture lettering, this verse from the responsorial just leapt out at me. And as I wrote and prayed, the words that started by feeling like a plea ("please be with me") shifted into an assurance ("I know You are always with me, even when I'm feeling low") and finally into a comfort ("I can feel your Spirit with me"). It was truly a beautiful gift of peace and healing that I really needed. I think this verse might make it into a collection of faith based notecards I'm planning! At the very least it's going on my own wall! .

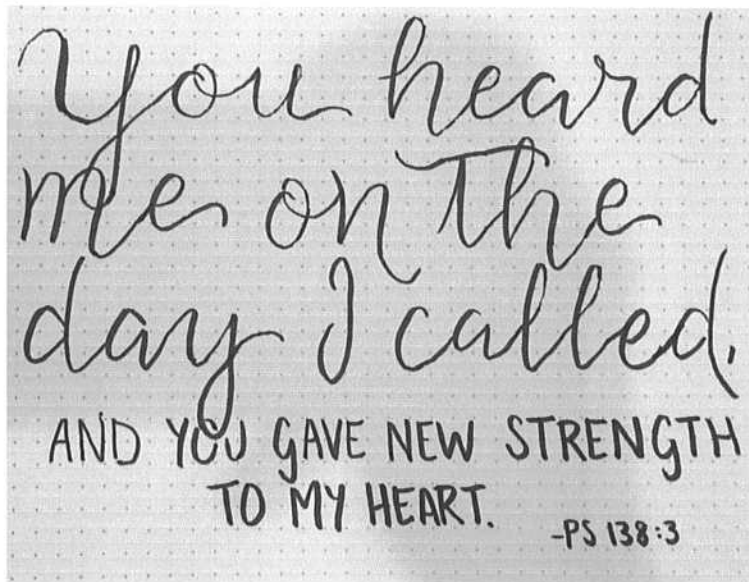
Give me back the
joy of your salvation;
sustain in me a generous
spirit.

Ps 51:12
8 March '17

catholiccalligrapher [Wednesday] "Give me back the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a generous spirit." Psalm 51:12 🙏 .

So this is the same verse I wrote on Ash Wednesday (still from this Wednesday's responsorial though!). I spent much of Tuesday feeling so crushed and demoralized, and then had this amazing experience of peace and healing while doing my lettering/prayer that night, that when I saw this Psalm again Wednesday morning I felt like it was a chance to hit "reset" in a way. I no longer felt so alone, and wanted to express my prayer that I might retain both the joyful knowledge of salvation and the generosity and willingness to trust in God that is so central, always, but especially during Lent when our attention and awareness are turned up a few notches.

From a lettering perspective, I decided to do this version with watercolors and a brush, and to have wavy, uneven guidelines. This is totally outside of my comfort zone, but it was fun and I'm actually pretty happy with some bits of it! 😊



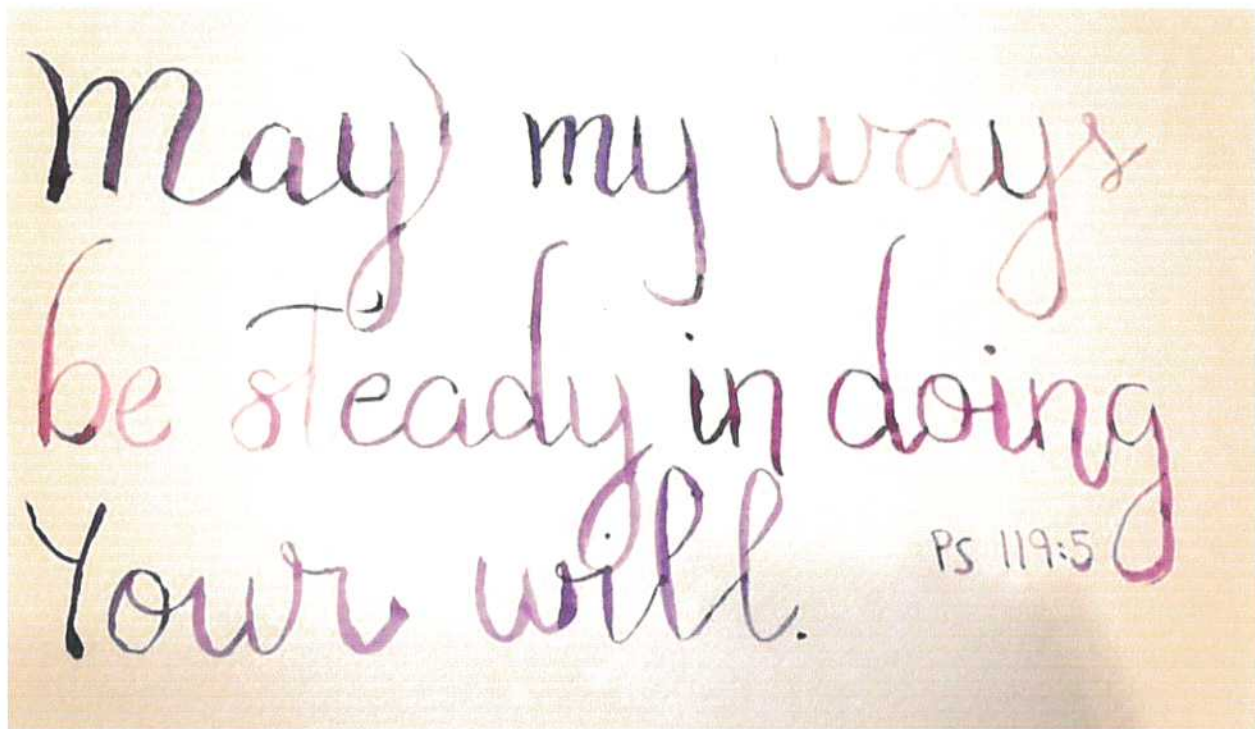
catholiccalligrapher [Thursday] "You heard me on the day I called, and you gave new strength to my heart." Psalm 138:3 🙏

What a few days in my spiritual life! Tuesday night I felt defeated by the world, and prayed for my heart to be comforted and my spirit healed, and through the process of writing the verse and praying, I did experience that grace. So Wednesday morning I saw that Psalm 51 was back up again, and as I did my lettering I prayed that God would bring me back to what this season is all about. And a few hours later, I made a new friend at lunch (a young colleague of my Dad), and wound up talking about our faith and the paths we've each taken to get to where we are for almost 3 hours! He comes from a VERY different Christian tradition, but was patient and open with my questions, and non-judgmental about the areas where we disagree. Our conversation made me want to study my own faith more rigorously - not just the Bible, but the Catechism as well. So amazing to see how God answers our prayers, even when we don't know exactly what it is we're praying for. But I do really feel like my prayer on Tuesday was heard and answered, so today I wrote from a place of faith, praise, and security.

I rely
my whole being relies
Yahweh
on your promise.
Ps 130:5

catholiccalligrapher [Friday] "My whole being relies on your promise" Psalm 130:5 🙏 .

Some of you know that I was away from the church for most of early adulthood. Some of it had to do with the Church, and a lot of it had to do with my fear of acknowledging my dependence on God. It was during this time that I was really coming to terms with my disability, and my feelings about being physically dependent on other people for literally everything I do; the last thing I wanted was to be dependent on an invisible force in my internal life! But here's the thing... whether I acknowledged it or not, I always KNEW that I was reliant upon God's promise for EVERYTHING. When I finally let go of the need for retaining that false sense of control and said "Here I am, Lord," such a weight lifted. But I always need reminding... especially right now, when my human frailty had me running short on patience and humility. Not only can I rely on God's Word, I have no choice. It's just a fact. My being, now and always, depends on God's protection. Five years ago, that would have filled me with fear and anger. Today it fills me with peace.



catholiccalligrapher [Saturday] "May my ways be steady in doing your will." Psalm 119:5 🙏 .

This verse just leapt out at me when I read it Saturday! I'm not going to lie - after a little over a week, I'm struggling with my Lenten commitments - especially those to do with self-denial. I catch myself rationalizing, justifying, and flat out embracing with no pretense the things that I'm intended to abstain from - or replacing them with things that scratch the same itch. I've been giving into temptation, and this is my prayer that God helps me me steady and steadfast as I take one day (or hour!) at a time this Lenten season.

... Jesus came up
and touched them,
saying, "Stand up,
do not be afraid."
Mt 17:7
12-Mon17

catholiccalligrapher [Sunday] "Do not be afraid."
Matthew 17:7 🙏

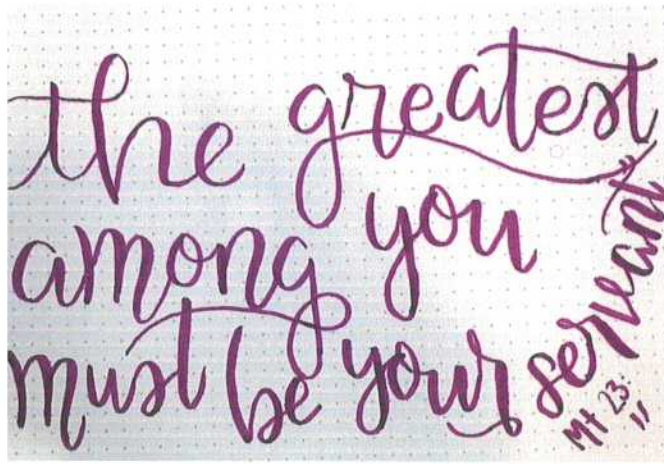
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This Gospel reading is the basis of one of my favorite hymns, "Be not afraid." It functions to connect the old law with the new, to position Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophets. But that's all the academic stuff... important, of course, but what hits me is simply knowing that one day I will hear God say, "Stand up, and don't be afraid." For someone who had never stood and who has spent most of her life afraid (and is still hyperalert - has to be, even with a 75-pound service dog!)... the thought of stepping out of my wheelchair, shedding the fear, and knowing that I can truly rest in the arms of the Lord? I don't even have words for the peace with which that fills me!

"Be compassionate, just as
your Father is compassionate.
Do not judge, & you will not
be judged; do not condemn, & you
will not be condemned; forgive
& you will be forgiven."

Luke 6
6:36-39

catholiccalligrapher [Monday] "Forgive, and you will
be forgiven." Luke 6:36-39 🙏

Today's Gospel is, for me, what being a follower of Christ is about. During Lent we spend a lot of time reading and understanding how Jesus came to fulfill the old law, to be the ultimate sacrifice, and to leave us with a new law. If we are to love the Lord, and love others, we simply cannot also sit in a place of judgment or condemnation. Our Father is compassionate and forgiving, but if we want to receive that grace we must also be compassionate and forgiving, especially towards those who are different or make it difficult. Period. We are explicitly called NOT to judge, for only God has that right. Of course that's really really hard - we are human, after all! So we must pray for understanding, patience, generosity, and humility.



catholiccalligrapher [Tuesday] "The greatest among you must be your servant." Matthew 23:11 🙏

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In today's Gospel, Jesus cracks the whip on his followers' desires (and Jewish tradition) around setting themselves aside from/above others based on their education, standing in society, etc. It's another teaching about humility, a theme that's strong this week. (And I swallowed my own pride by posting this, instead of tearing out the page and starting again, when it became obvious that I had run out of room!) A few other thoughts occurred to me while I was writing and meditating on this verse... 1) Once again, Jesus is reminding us that we are all the same in God's eyes. This evokes yesterday's Gospel in which we are flat-out told not to judge or condemn. 2) For some people, humbling themselves before the Lord as well as their human community is the big challenge. For other people, though (and I count myself in this group) it's accepting the service of others that is the challenge. I suspect that this also has to do with the body God gave me... having a disability that requires me to be dependent on others for everything, and to constantly be asking for help, I struggle with not feeling like a burden on those around me. So it's especially difficult to accept random acts of kindness and service - I find myself questioning the person's motives (do they just feel sorry for me?), which I realize belies my own sense of worthiness. 3) But Jesus is really clear here... we must serve one another in humility, and for that to work we must also receive the service of others. This service, accepting and giving it, is not just Jesus's teaching, but also his blessing. None of us are truly deserving, and yet by his sacrifice, Jesus had made us worthy of this gift, this grace. Accepting the loving service of another person is part of how we live our faith, just as much as offering humble service. (Kinda trippy!)

JESUS SAID: "WHOEVER DRINKS THIS
WATER WILL BE THIRSTY AGAIN; BUT...
THE water THAT I SHALL GIVE WILL
BECOME A spring of water
WITHIN, WELLING UP FOR
eternal life."

John
4:13-14

19 March '17
@catholiccalligrapher

catholiccalligrapher [Sunday] "...a spring of water
within, welling up for eternal life." John 4:13-14 🙏

I got a little bit behind doing my daily scripture lettering, and a little overwhelmed, so last night I decided to just pick up where I was and start again - another Lenten lesson this project has given me the opportunity to put into practice!

So, entire books have been written about this story of the woman at the well; I clearly remember how these seemingly simple couple of paragraphs opened up to me, layer upon layer, in my undergrad exegesis class. I think what I carry the most from this passage is that Jesus pretty intentionally chose "the least of these" to reveal his message to. The woman at the well is about as on the edge of society as someone could be, and yet the Child of God chose her to deliver the good news to her town. This reminds me that Christ dwells in each of us, no matter where we are on an given hierarchy; and that in addition to caring for "the least of these," we must listen to them, because the Spirit isn't always (or ever) going to communicate through the most powerful people on the planet. (Irreverent aside: should the Spirit ever need an immediate, direct line to humanity, though, Donald Trump's Twitter feed would be a good bet!) Anyway, these takeaways circle back to the theme of humility that has been popping up for me a lot these past few weeks!

It was because
he did these things
on the Sabbath the
Jews began to harass
Jesus.

John 1:16

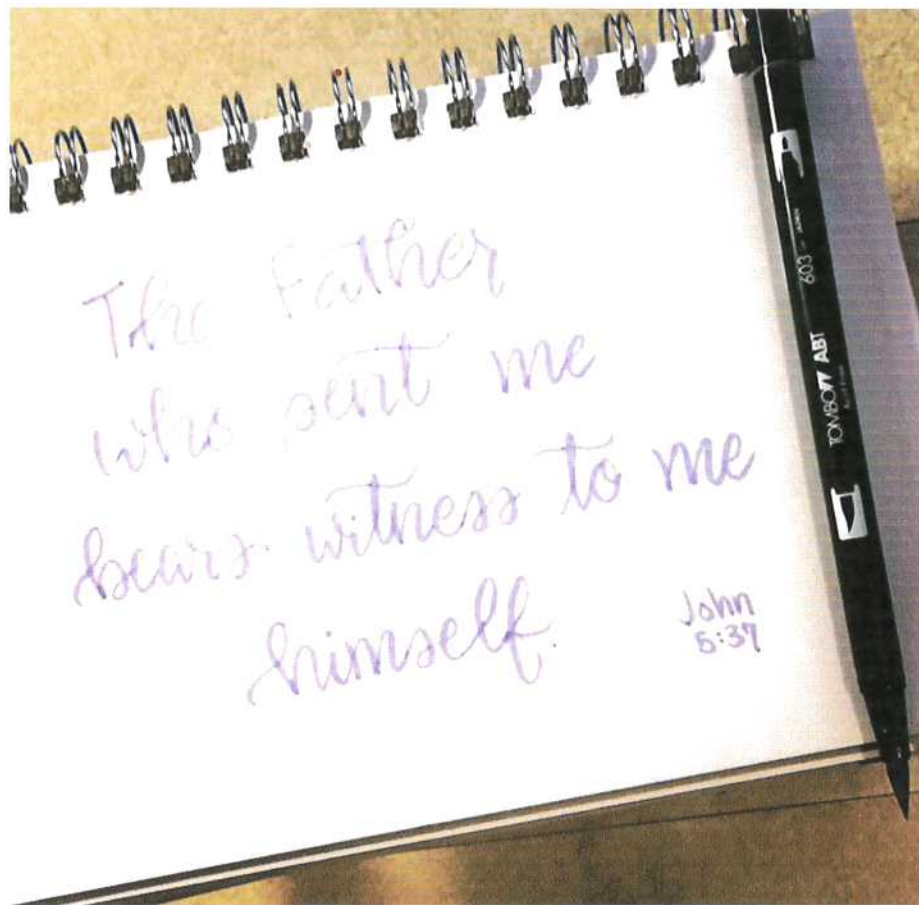
catholiccalligrapher [Monday] "It was because he did these things on the Sabbath that the Jews began to harass Jesus." John 5:16 🙏

1. I incorrectly labeled this text as John chapter 1; in fact yesterday's reading did come from chapter 5. Oops!
2. Last week I was busy getting ready for a neighborhood market and fell down on this Lenten commitment. (And others...) Instead of berating myself, I'm choosing to learn from it. And I'm learning more about my humanity ("Look! Shiny!"), and my need to mindfully and consistently turn to God to deepen my faith - it doesn't happen on its own! This has been one of the most important things I've learned from this project, because it's so tangible, is just how hard keeping a daily commitment is, even a small one, even for 40 days! And so once again I turn to God and the Blessed Mother to ask for their help in this and every other part of my life.
- 3: Two things about this reading. First, we are starting to see the major themes we've been reading about coming together as the Passion approaches. Second, of all the things that Jesus could have done to tweak the rabbis, of all the laws he could have broken, he chose to heal a person with a disability. Even as he was doing those things that needed to be done to bring about his death and resurrection, he was still teaching us about what's important.

...he spoke of
God as his
own Father
and so made himself
God's equal.
from
John 5:18

catholiccalligrapher [Wednesday] "...he spoke of
God as his own father..." from John 5:18 🙏 .

In this passage we're still learning about the many things Jesus did to annoy the priests and fulfill his purpose. But what popped out in this verse, "he spoke of God as his own father," reminded me of one of the most personally important/eye-opening homilies I ever heard, when I first learned how revolutionary it was for Jesus to call God "abba," father. Before that, God was this distant being, almost magical, certainly not someone who we can relate to. By using the word "abba," Jesus was shaking up the system. But here's what shook ME up: in Western civilisation we've gotten so used to thinking of God as "Father" that it has lost its revolutionary feel. The priest giving the homily suggested that we think of God as "Daddy," because that carries the same revolutionary intimacy as Jesus calling God "Father." @catholiccalligrapher hashtags



catholiccalligrapher [Thursday] "The Father who sent me bears witness to me himself." from John 5:37 🙏

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You know those days when it feels like the daily reading was picked just for you? Well I have to go give a deposition this morning and am very anxious. But I read this passage and was reminded that leaning on the Lord and speaking the truth, I have nothing to be worried about. (I would still appreciate your prayers though!) @catholiccalligrapher

I am the true
vine, & my Father
is the vinedresser.

John 15:1

catholiccalligrapher "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine keeper." John 15:1 🙏

I'm back! I've been facing a lot of physical challenges lately, more than usual, and many days haven't done any art at all, but when I have, I haven't been making an effort to maintain this project. But I know what a blessing it was during Lent, and also that even if I can't do it every day, God appreciates every gift we can give, and something is always better than nothing. So this morning I grabbed a marker and wrote this first verse from today's Gospel reading.

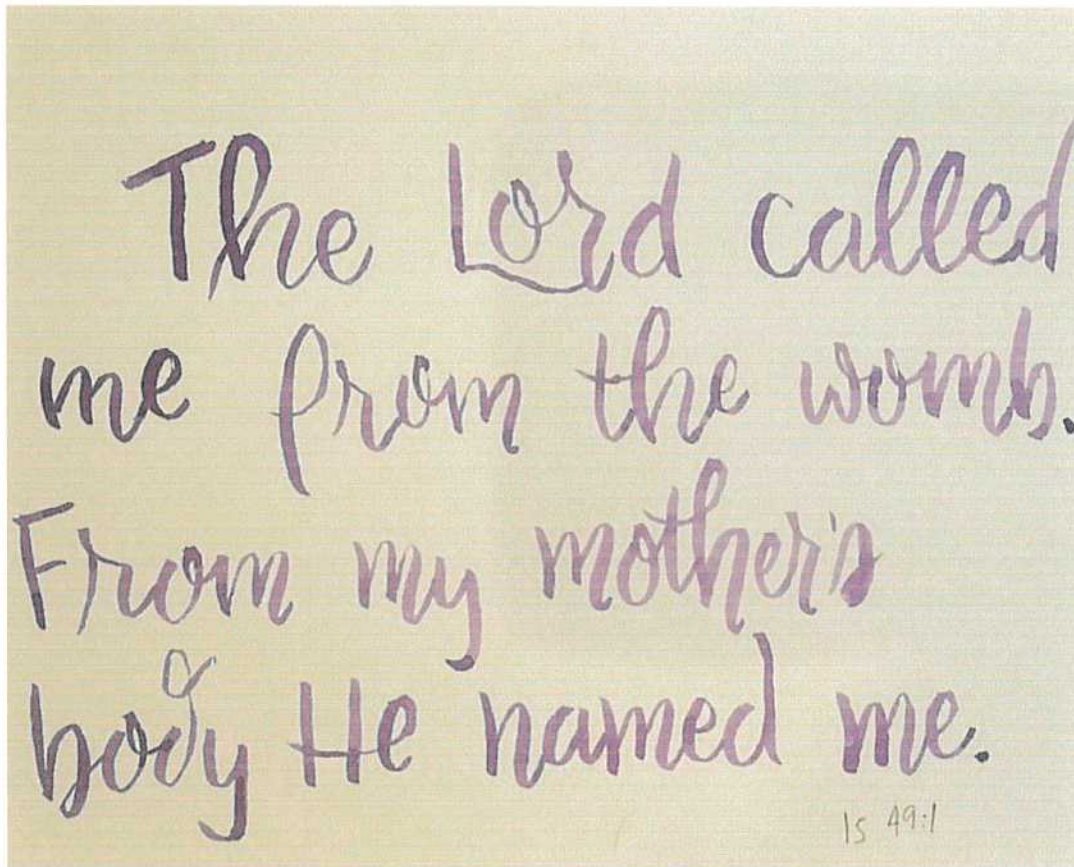
This is one of those beautiful metaphors Jesus used that made His message so relatable. And even though most of us don't grow grapes these days, we've all pruned flowers this time of year. And just as with any flowing plant, the parts of ourselves that we give the most energy are the parts that bear fruit. This lesson reminds me that I don't have to do much - that if I begin to put more energy into my relationship with God, the unproductive/un-Godly parts will be pruned away without my even having to ask, as God is the ultimate gardener of my spirit.

I HAVE LOVED YOU JUST
AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED
ME. —♥—♥

Remain in my love.

John 15:9

18 MAY 2017
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catholiccalligrapher "The Lord called me from the womb. From my mother's body He named me." Isaiah 49:1 🙏

I had an amazing response to this morning's Gospel, but today I chose to quickly letter this verse from Isaiah. Today is my 37th birthday. When I was 1, I was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy and my parents were given a prognosis of 2-3 years. I obviously believe that God's hand is in my ongoing health and vitality, but it is more than that. My disability has been the source, one way or another, of pretty much every good thing in my life. So I believe God blessed me with these genes, in my mother's womb, not as something to "overcome," but as a gift. This verse reminds me, on difficult days, that God doesn't make mistakes!