

## REFLECTIONS ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

Use these notes to weave themes from CRS Rice Bowl into weekly homilies, reflections and faith-sharing gatherings. Catholic social teaching principles for each week are taken from the CRS Rice Bowl Lenten Calendar. All Sunday readings come from Cycle B.

Week 1 - February 22: *Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15*

### Sacredness and Dignity of the Human Person

When God created us, he made us in his image and likeness. That means that every human being has a special value and purpose. We need to care for each other so that we can be the people that God calls us to be.

† God never leaves us. He created each of us as unique, valuable persons and works actively in our lives, desiring that we grow closer to him. *How has God been at work in our lives during these first days of Lent?*

† Today's readings show us that God gives tangible reminders of his committed love and his desire to be present to

us: the rainbow after the flood, Jesus' preaching, the waters of Baptism. *How do we act as tangible reminders of God's love, especially to those who are most in need?*

† This week's CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope takes us to Tanzania, where we are reminded of the important role a community can play in supporting an individual's work. This takes trust and commitment—two themes apparent in today's readings. *Am I committed to myself, my God and my neighbor? How do I show this trust and commitment, and where is there room for growth?*

Week 2 - March 1: *Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9*

### Care for Creation

God created every plant, every mountain-top, every animal—everything. And God said that these things are good. We find God in these good things he made, and so we must take care of creation, both for ourselves and for all of our human family.

† God makes a promise to Abraham and his descendants, and God keeps his promises. *What promises do we make to those who will come after us, especially in thinking about how we care for God's creation?*

† Abraham's faith in God—not some legal contract—is what allowed God to act in the life of Abraham's family.

*How often do we try to regulate how God works? Is this thinking not as God does, but as human beings do? Do we allow the Spirit to move in us?*

† This week's CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope takes us to Nicaragua, where we are reminded of the essential link between the health of the earth and the health of humanity. *What lessons does the Transfigured Christ offer us as stewards of creation? What are we called to do in "coming down from the mountain," in working in the nitty-gritty reality of daily life?*

## Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

Jesus spent years working as a carpenter. Work is important to help people live good lives, so people must be paid a fair wage to provide for themselves and their families.

† We are reminded that God worked and God rested, and we are asked to do the same. *Do we empower others to attain meaningful work? Do we help others to keep the Sabbath? Do we keep it ourselves?*

† Jesus is angered by injustice and takes action. He is unafraid to let his opinions be heard. *Do we speak out against injustice where we see it, or do we assume it's someone else's responsibility?*

† This week's CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope takes us to Niger, where we meet a family whose livelihood is governed by the seasons. We all experience seasons of challenge, injustice or sorrow. *How do we*



Habibou Alassane, his wife, and nine children are farmers in Tourbey, a remote village in Niger. Nearly half of the population in this West African country struggles with getting enough food.  
Photo by Francois Therrien for CRS

*display our hope that a season of justice will come, our trust that “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom?”*

## Option for the Poor

Jesus tells us to care for those who are most in need in the world. He reminds us of our Christian duty to give a voice to those who go unheard and to help those who are most vulnerable.

† The bronze serpent became for the Israelites a symbol of hope, one they could look to for healing. In the same way, the risen Christ becomes that same hope for us. *Are we symbols of hope for those who live in difficult situations, especially the poorest of the poor?*

† We are created in Christ to do the particular good works God has prepared for us. That means we have a duty both to pursue our own good works and empower others to do the same. *How do we empower those around us—poor and rich—to do those good works?*

† This week's CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope takes us to Lebanon, where we meet a family of refugees struggling to find their place in a foreign land. We know our Israelite ancestors fled to foreign lands. *How do we welcome the stranger among us?*



Week 5 – March 22: *Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33*

## Call to Family, Community and Participation

Human beings are social by nature. We, like the early disciples, are called to come together as a community whether that community is our classroom, workplace or family.

† God makes covenants with groups of people—entire communities—and he keeps his promises. *What does this say about God? What does this say about how we, in community, relate to God?*

† Jesus recognizes that he has arrived at a difficult point in his life for the sake of glorifying God. He commits to doing God’s will, no matter the cost. *Do we offer our suffering up for the glory of God? Do we help others work through their own difficulties for God’s greater glory?*

† This week’s CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope takes us to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where we meet a community that comes together to



After learning different ways of treating banana wilt disease on Hamuli’s farm in Democratic Republic of Congo, community members visited each other’s fields and worked together to clean the disease from the trees. Photo by Jean Paul Cigulube/CRS

improve their harvests. *Do we see God in new ways when we come together as a community? How does God speak through others?*

Week 6, Palm Sunday – March 29: *Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15:47; or Mark 15:1-39*

## The Common Good

As God’s family, we are all called to look out for one another. It’s not just about “me.” It’s about “us.” How can we be sure that the decisions we make in our own community and in the world help build up and protect God’s entire family?

† Isaiah reminds us that God gives us a “well-trained tongue ... to answer the weary a word that will waken them.” *Do we listen to God’s Spirit within us? How does the Spirit motivate us and guide our words as we work for a more just world?*

† Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.” *How are we called, especially during Lent, to empty ourselves for the good of others?*

† This week’s CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope takes us to a community in the United States, in the Diocese of Albany. *How have our Lenten reflections on global solidarity affected how we view poor and vulnerable people in our own communities?*

