Jesus faced real temptations in the desert and he had to make some hard choices. During these weeks of Lent, look at the choices that are facing you. Pray, weigh the actions and ask, “What will be life-giving to me and my family?” Be open to a new direction from the Lord for “not by bread alone shall you live but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”

God wants to bless our families. Are we too busy and stressed to notice and accept these blessings? God is present, waiting to meet and bless us in our families, but needs our time and attention. We need to take time together as families to have fun, to talk, to work together, to eat and pray. Schedule some “family times” in the calendar and see Jesus in the transfiguration of your family members and relationships.

In Jesus’ time, men and women did not converse; Samaritans and Jews hated each other. In today’s Gospel, Jesus was able to change the life of the woman at the well because he was willing to break down the barriers of hatred and misunderstanding. Whenever we break the barriers of misunderstanding and mend tattered relationships in our own families, we too discover the “gift of God” in our midst.

In today’s gospel, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. When Lazarus came out of the tomb, Jesus instructed his family and friends to untie the bandages that bound him. God still depends on us to free others so they might live. Who in your family is tied up by pride or entombed by grief or resentment? Hear Jesus’ call to “unbind him,” with mercy and compassion.

That God’s power will break the hold of addictions and heal the shame that isolates and destroys families. Let us pray to the Lord.

That couples may have a renewing ‘mountaintop’ experience together and feel joy and hope for the future. Let us pray to the Lord.

That dating, engaged or married couples trapped in a fearful cycle of anger, threats or violence will seek and be able to find help. Let us pray to the Lord.

That individuals or children blinded by pain or resentment following divorce may seek the Lord and find help and healing for their pain and anger. Let us pray to the Lord.

That families grieving the death of a loved one may know the healing presence and peace of the Risen Jesus and be raised to new life. We pray to the Lord.