

Introduction To This Guide

These daily devotional guides are provided to encourage you to listen and reflect on how God is speaking to you during this Season of Lent. The question at the end of each day's contemplation is intended to foster further reflection and prayer throughout the day. In addition, space is provided for you to document your thoughts on how you hear God speaking to you at this time. May you be blessed and transformed through the Holy Spirit as you ponder God's word during this most holy of seasons. ++ *Provided by:* Community Missions Inc., 1570 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303, Phone: (716) 285-3403, www.communitymissions.org

Where Do I Begin?

Begin each day with the Prayer of Illumination to help, prepare your heart to hear God's word for you. Read "to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information...Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed...Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence."*

Let us Pray a *Prayer of Illumination*:

All-Seeing One, above me, around me, within me —
guide my vision as I engage with your sacred words.

Look down upon me, look out from within me, look all around me.

See through my eyes, hear through my ears, feel through my heart.

God of Wisdom, touch me where I need to be touched;

and when my heart is touched, give me the grace to lay

down this Holy Book and ask significant questions:

Why has my heart been touched by you?

How am I to be changed through your touch?

All-Seeing One, I need to change, I need to look a little more like You.

May these sacred words change and transform me.

Then I can meet You face to face...when I shall be healed forever.

Your Word and the touch of your Spirit bring healing...

a healing that will last.

O Eye of God, look not away.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and put a new and right spirit within me. Amen.

Adapted from *A Tree Full of Angels* by Macrina Wiederkehr [As quoted in *A Guide To Prayer For All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room]

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY – Day 3

FASTING BY BEING MERCIFUL

Isaiah 58:4-6

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight,
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,

to undo the thongs of the yoke,

To let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

TRUSTING IN THE LORD'S MERCY

We often think of Lent as a time to give up something: chocolate or smoking or another habit that needs correcting. As so *fasting and mercy* seem an odd combination, and yet according to Isaiah the two are indelibly linked. Fasting involves some form of denying self, to refrain from something. And so perhaps fasting is more than going without something. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus discusses fasting in the context of piety, he says, "whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show other that they are fasting..." (Matt. 6:16). This sounds like the kind of fasting that Isaiah is railing against. According to Isaiah fasting as a justice concern.

Thomas Merton* says that however you interpret *fasting*, "it is necessary that at the beginning of [a] fast, the Lord should show Himself to us in His mercy." (p. 6). How this is acted out in real life extends beyond giving up a meal or two. It is more of an exchange, denying one's self (giving up something) in order to provide another person something that they lack: like the dignity of just treatment in the case of standing up for someone who is being cast out or treated unfairly, like using what you gave up (in the case of time) to work to make laws more fair and equitable,

or even (in the case of money) giving sacrificially to a cause that matters to you. These are all ways of enmeshing fasting with mercy.

PRAYER

Teach me, O Lord, the ways in which I may honor you with my fast. Help me to see where injustice is prevalent. Give me the courage, strength, and wisdom to *loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke.* Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

What is one thing I can fast from this Lent to show mercy?

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Lent 2022 – Day 3

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



The Temptation In The Wilderness Briton Riviere (1840–1920)

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY FASTING BY BEING MERCIFUL



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This week’s devotional resource was written by Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow, President of the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions, and edited by Rev. Mark H. Breese of Community Missions. The content was created specifically keeping in mind the populations served by Community Missions.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Scripture Verses are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.

*The choice of Daily Scripture texts and reflection questions are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.

ff Frank G. Honeycutt, “How Jesus Hangs On”, *Marry a Pregnant Virgin: Unusual Stories for New and Curious Christians*, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2008, p. 100-104.

ff Carlo Carretto, *Why Me Lord*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 117.

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.