

Introduction To This Guide

These daily devotions 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."ttt

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]

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK - Day 11

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43-48

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

LOVING AND LETTING GO

How hard is it for us to see that God made our enemies in his image, just like God made *us* in his image? Or to put it another way, how hard is it to see *Jesus* in the face of our enemy? And yet, that is what Jesus asks us to do. What if we begin by saying, "God loves me, God loves you, God even loves _____."
[you fill in the blank].

Jesus says, *pray for those who persecute you so that YOU may be children of your Father...* So, in order to be considered God's beloved children, WE must love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. In order to be God's children we MUST pray for those who hate us, those who hurt us, those who seek to destroy us.

But let us *not* misunderstand. Jesus is NOT saying that you must continue to let someone persecute or abuse you! That is *not* what this passage is saying. Jesus says *pray* for them, and do not harbor resentment against them because in the end, harboring resentment against someone only hurts you—that would be like *you* taking poison hoping the *other* person will die!

Loving and praying for your enemies allows forgiveness to seep in. Praying for those who persecute you helps to make us realize and accept that they are *also* created in God's image. Although they are not *acting* as God wishes, the proper way to keep them from hurting you

further is to *love* them, *pray* for them, and ultimately to *forgive* them and let them go. That's not easy, but it is what God calls us to do.

Jesus states a fact: God sends rain on everyone - both the righteous and the unrighteous. And the sun rises on everyone - both the evil and the good. God does not discriminate - sun and rain fall on all creation. The difference comes in how we *respond* to the truth that sun and the rain falls on *all of us*. We are called to follow God's command to Love: love your God; love your neighbor; love your enemies. When we do this, God's grace will come to bear on *all* people, and his mercy will bless us *all*.

PRAYER

Give me, O Lord, the courage to love my enemies, and the strength to pray for them. Help me to see beyond my own understanding, and reveal to me your beloved child in them. Earnestly and fervently I pray. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name one person who has hurt you and pray for that person.

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 11

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Because of Your Love I Am Free!, Drawing, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK LOVE YOUR ENEMIES



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), HarperCollins Publishers, 1989.

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

¹ James C. Fenhagen, *Mutual Ministry*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, pgs. 89- Quote reworded for easier reading. Ibid. ¹¹ pg.88.

¹²Walter Russell Bowie, *The Compassionate Christ*, Abington Press, 1965, pgs. 99-100.

¹³Thomas Merton, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, pg. 28.

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