

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK
Day 17 • *Begin with Prayer of Illumination*

THE SECRET TO GIVING AND PRAYING
Matthew 6:1-8

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

PRAYER AND

Jesus says *beware of practicing your piety before others... Piety* is a devotion to religious observance, but *prayer* is entering the heart of God.ⁱ Richard Foster, in his book *Prayer*, says prayer “is about a love relationship: an enduring, continuing, growing love relationship with the great God of the universe, and overwhelming love invites a response.” Our response to God’s *overwhelming love* for us is to love well in return. So, “to be effective pray-ers, we need to be effective lovers...real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love”—falling in love with God. Prayer and giving alms is an outgrowth of that love.

Foster says the key to the heart of God is prayer, and that Jesus is the door. Jesus teaches us the way to God’s heart; and reveals the God’s love for us through his (Jesus’s) healing ministry, powerful wit-

ness, and inclusive love for all people. Prayer and giving alms is our humble and grateful response.

PRAYER

Help us, O God our Creator, to be always loving. Help those who observe us to see only the humility and love we have for you, and no selfish motive for recognition and praise. Thank you for your overwhelming love for your people. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

What are your thoughts about praying and giving in secret?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022, Day 17

A Guide for Reflection and Prayer

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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

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

¹ Paula Ripple, Growing Strong at Broken Places, as quoted in A Guide to Prayer for All God's People, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 255-6.

² James M. Efird, in Jeremiah Prophet Under Siege, Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1979, p. 100.

³ Charles de Foucauld, Meditations of a Hermit, as quoted in A Guide to Prayer for All God's People, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 111.

⁴ Richard J. Foster, Prayer, HarperCollins Publishers, 1992., p. 2-3

⁵ Henri J. M. Nouwen, Beloved: Henri Nouwen in Conversation, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007. p. 46,48,18.

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 your thoughts God speaking time. May you be blessed and transformed through the Holy Spirit as you ponder God's most holy of words. ++ *Pro-Community Missions Inc.*, 1570 Buffalo Falls, NY 14303, 285-3403,



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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," 18.

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