

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."

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 OF THE THIRD WEEK - Day 24

RETURN TO THE LORD

Hosea 14:1-4

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Take words with you

and return to the LORD;

say to him,

"Take away all guilt;

accept that which is good,

and we will offer the fruit of our lips.

Assyria shall not save us;

we will not ride upon horses;

we will say no more, 'Our God,'

to the work of our hands.

In you the orphan finds mercy."

I will heal their disloyalty;

I will love them freely,

for my anger has turned from them.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Why does God do it? Why does God, throughout all these generations, put up with his people? God doesn't really *need* us - God created the whole world and everything in it. It is so

evenly balanced in fact, that it would run just fine on its own - except that God's last creation - human beings - were added to the mix. So why does God continue to seek us, continue to work with us, continue to change God's mind about destroying us? Catherine of Siena says it is because, "God has fallen [madly] in love with what he has made!"¹

Catherine claims our God: the eternal, infinite, wise, beautiful, merciful, charitable, generous, Father God who gives us refuge and hope and is eternally good; is "drunk with desire" for our salvation. When we run away God comes looking for us, and when we stray God draws us even closer. The evidence of God's amazing and unconditional love for us is found in Jesus the Christ. God's ultimate act of

love was to “clothe [God’s self] in our humanity,” to become one *with* us through his Son, to walk with us and show us the way to *live* the kingdom. So great is God’s love for God’s creation!

PRAYER

Merciful Lord, help us to be merciful as you are merciful, loving as you are loving, and forgiving as you are forgiving. Do not give up on us, but reveal to us your wisdom and with discernment help us to usher in your kingdom, that all may know Love because we are followers of you. Amen

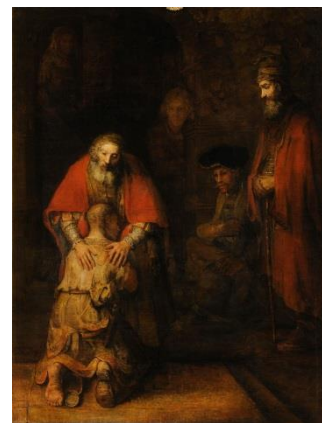
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name one guilt that still needs healing, and one way that you have returned to the Lord from a time of wandering away.

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Lent 2022 – Day 24

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK UNCONDITIONAL LOVE



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)*. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.
Prayer of Illumination adapted from, *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 125.
The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.

¹*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989, p. 2293

¹Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 123.

¹¹Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992.

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