

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]

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT - Day 26

LEAVING HOME

Luke 15:11-20a

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father."

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Henri Nouwen in *The Return of the Prodigal Son*^{ll} puts himself in the parable, in this case in the part of the younger son. He says, "Over and over again I have left home. I have fled the hands of blessing and run off to faraway places searching for love! This is the great tragedy of my life and of the lives of so many I meet on my journey. Somehow I have become deaf to the voice that calls me the Beloved, have left the only place where I can hear that voice, and have gone off desperately hoping that I would find somewhere else what I could no longer find at home." (p. 39)

Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, we leave the comfort of what we know, searching "over the rainbow" only to discover that, in the end, there is *no place like home*. And along the way we are hurt and wounded, impoverished even, but without this wounding we do not mature and grow.

As God's beloved children we have choices, some call it *free will*. Our free will can lead us into some pretty dark places but God al-

lows that to happen, because God's hopes that our suffering will lead us home again, into his loving arms. And there, wounded and broken, we bow down and confess: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.* And the Father, so deliriously happy to see his son or daughter alive, welcomes them home.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, wherever I stray, give me the assurance that I may always return home to you. Amen

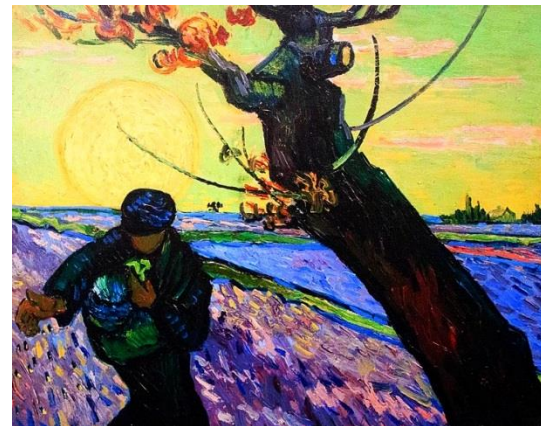
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when you have left home searching for something only to find it when you return.?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 26

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME



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.