

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]

THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK - Day 37

PERFECT LOVE

1 John 4:17-21

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

TRUST LOVE

A word not mentioned in this text is trust, but trust is a very important component in love. To say you love without trusting the one you say you love, is to be in a constant state of fear. And, as John says, *there is no fear in love*. Trusting leaves us vulnerable to being hurt. But there is something worse than being hurt, and that is not risking love at all. For by risking love we place ourselves in a most wonderfully precarious position where we may receive the most precious gift - the gift of complete and total love by another, *perfect love that casts out fear*.

However, there is a possibility that we may be hurt, but being hurt actually can serve to tenderize us to be more compassionate and more loving. Being hurt lets us know that we are human; it can sensitize us to be more loving toward others - we can empathize - because we know how it feels to be hurt. Because we love our brothers and sisters, we do not want them to be afflicted with the pain that we have endured.

John says that *those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen*. I have heard that sentiment expressed in another way: You only love God as much as the person you love the least in this world.

And so we must ask ourselves, is that how much we want to love God, only as much as the person we love the least? Or do we want to surrender to God's love and *love because he first loved us*? Risk love, allow God's love to penetrate even the most hateful of feelings, obeying the commandment we have from him: *those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also*.

PRAYER

Let me trust in you enough, dear Lord, to risk loving my brother and sister even when I may be hurt in the process. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

When have you had to trust that loving was the best course of action?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

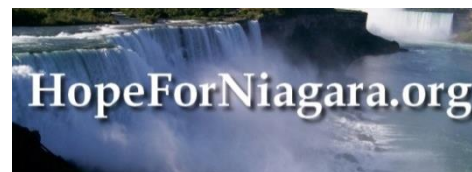
Lent 2022 – Day 37

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK TRUST LOVE



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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 are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.
- ¹Invocation, *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Shawchuck and Job, Upper Room Books, p. 137.
- ²Carlo Carretto, *In Search of the Beyond*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Shawchuck and Job, Upper Room Books, p. 138-9.
- ³Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2006. From pgs. 2-4.
- ⁴www.blueletterbible.org, *glorified*, using Strong's Lexicon #G1392.

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