

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.

GOOD NEWS

Isaiah 61:1-3

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion -
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

OVERTURNED

When I read this passage from Isaiah I think of being in court and having the guilty verdict brought by 'the jury of my peers' overturned by a loving and merciful judge. Someone who believes that "mercy triumphs over judgment." (James 2:13)

Isaiah's passage is good news for those we typically think of as oppressed, broken hearted, captives and prisoners, those who mourn, and those who are weighed down by criticism or abuse. But it may be easier for us to see these attributes in people that are *victims* of an offense, than for the offenders themselves, who may *also* be victims or prisoners of oppression, captive and broken. Seeing and acknowledging *both* sides is where the true power of *justice* is served.

The day of vengeance of our God implies that God will bring about *justice* for an offense. Justice requires right and fair treatment for all parties. *Vengeance* implies retribution, revenge, retaliation or punishment for the offender; but *mercy* suggests that we look a little deeper into

who is the offender and why. If the offender is subject - or captive - to an unjust system, then it is *the system* that needs correction as much or more than the offender. Justice for the offender must acknowledge the accountability of the unjust system that influenced the offender's actions. This doesn't leave anyone *off the hook*, but addresses to a greater degree the root of the problem, not just the fruit of the action. Jesus said, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but *woe to the one by whom* the stumbling block comes!" (Matthew 18:7)

PRAYER

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others, my ears that I may hear their cries, my heart that I may give comfort. Let me not fear to defend the weak and poor because of the anger of the strong and rich. Equip me to provide love, faith and hope where they are most needed, that I may do some work of peace for thee.** Amen

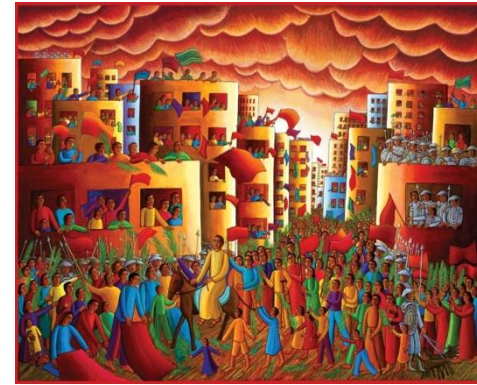
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

When have you been too quick to judge the accused?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 44

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Entry into the City - John August Swanson

HOLY THURSDAY OVERTURNED



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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.
*Prayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 91.
**adapted from: For Courage to Do Justice #456, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.
***Ibid, Amazing. Grace #378, first verse.
****Prayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 101.

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