

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 EASTER WEEK - Day 51

THE GRACE OF GOD

Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

GRACIOUS LIVING

It is hard to understand how *by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing*. We are taught to earn our way in the world. "The world doesn't owe you a living" I have heard said more than once. It is said to those who are currently unemployed and need assistance. It is said to children who do not want to do their chores around the house. It is said, grudgingly, by those who think *they have worked harder than they should* have and see that others *have not worked hard enough* for what they have.

But God's *grace* flies in the face of all of that. God's grace says, First: that there is no way we can ever be worthy enough to earn the grace that God offers to us.

Second, God loves us so much that he says, 'I know that you cannot ever *earn* this love that I offer to you - this abundant love that I give you that is more than life itself, this love that I offer to you that my Only Son showed you - there is no way you can earn this love that comes from my merciful and loving heart. But here's the thing, you do not *have* to earn this salvation - this saving love - because it is *free gift*. I give it to you free of charge. All I ask of you is that you *receive* my love - my saving grace.'

And Third, it is important for us to realize that there is nothing that we ourselves did for the blessings we now have. We were not bet-

ter or worse than anyone else we know. Our blessings do not come from our good deeds in the world but are free gift from God, the one and only God who loves us.

All of this requires humility, empathy, and compassion. Through our thankfulness for all that God has provided, we seek justice where we see injustice, we actively love our neighbor, and we share God’s love and merciful grace with everyone we meet. *For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

PRAYER

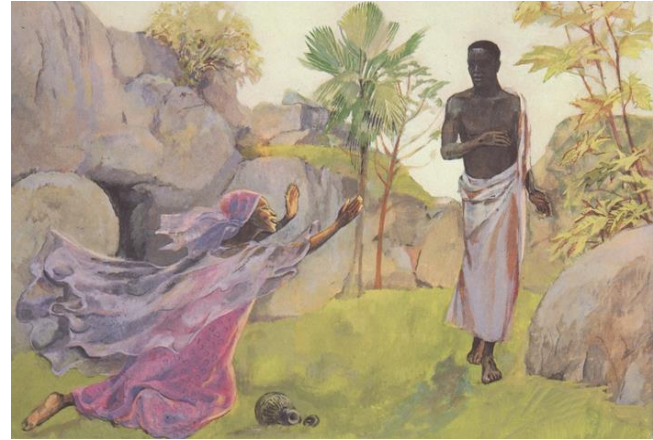
Thank you Lord for your precious gift and help me to always count my blessings: I lamented because I had no shoes, and then I saw a man who had no feet. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Count one blessing that you have that you did not *earn*?

First Thursday of Easter – Day 51

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Easter - Christ appears to Mary. JESUS MAFA. (1979)

THURSDAY AFTER EASTER GRACIOUS LIVING



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.
- *"Free from the Law of Lent", *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 102.
- **They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love #284, *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration*, Word Music, Waco, TX, 1986.
- ^aPrayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 103.
- ^aIbid, "The Power of Easter," p. 104., ^aIbid, Prayer, p. 105.
- ^{aa}*One Tin Soldier*, by The Original Caste, 1971.
- ^uMorning Has Broken #145, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989., ^uIbid, On Eagle's Wings #143

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