

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 EASTER WEEK - Day 52

OUTWARD APPEARANCES

Colossians 2:16-23

Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"? All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.

WHAT DID YOU "GIVE UP"

When I was a young girl I did not go to church. All I knew about "Lent" was that you gave something up. I would be asked, "What are you giving up for Lent?" Then they would share with me that they were giving up chocolate, or sweets or some other food item that they liked a lot. I did not equate it with a religious ritual, I probably thought of it as a *restart* for a New Year's resolution. It was years and years before I understood it as a religious ritual and it probably took even more years to understand why people *gave something up* for the season of Lent. Even today when I think of Lent I do not think so much of giving something up - like chocolate or ice cream (let it not be so :-)) - as adding something to - like giving to a special charity or adding an additional prayer time.

But here the author of Colossians devotes quite a bit of space criticizing an outward show of piety that does not reflect an inward commitment to God through Christ Jesus. In the last sentence we get to the crux of it: *These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting*

self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence. And so the lesson is this: By making a show of your piety by these *human ways of thinking*, then you are not growing in your faith in a way *that is from God*. In other words, do what you do for the glory of God, and God alone. Jesus says it like this: “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 6:1)

PRAYER

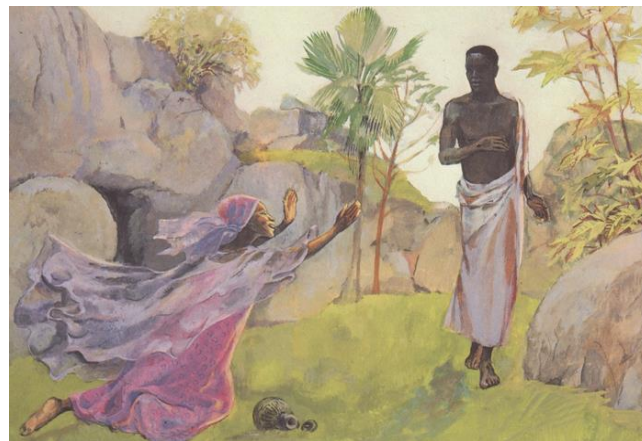
Free me from self-indulging behaviors, let me not deny myself only to be seen by others, but free me in service only for your glory, dear Lord. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Now that Lent is passed, what have I held on to for God’s glory?

First Friday of Easter – Day 52

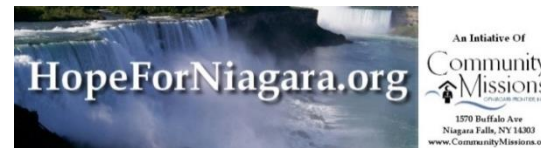
A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

FRIDAY AFTER EASTER

WHAT DID YOU “GIVE UP”



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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