

## Introduction To This Guide

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### *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.

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**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]

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT - Day 19

### *STAND FIRM*

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 8-10, 12-13

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did...We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer...So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

### *WILDERNESS WARNING*

The Apostle Paul reaches back into Israel's history to the event that defines them: their deliverance from Egypt and the 40 years of wilderness wandering that followed. Imagine being there and witnessing all of the plagues that God brought on Pharaoh, then the Passover, the parting of the sea, the water from the rock, manna, quails, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. All of it, and yet they grumbled against Moses and tested God.

And God got totally fed up and told Moses his plans to "disinherit them" (Numbers 14:12) Moses pleaded with God to forgive them, and "then the Lord said, 'I do forgive, just as you have asked; nevertheless - as I live...none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have...not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ances-

tors; none of [them] shall see it.’” (Numbers 14:20-23) They wandered in the wilderness and died there because they tested God too many times.

It is the same with us, our life goes better when we trust God. Then when trouble comes our way, God strengthens and guides us so that we are able to endure it. Paul warns, *Do not do as some of them did....don't spend your whole life in the wilderness, trust God and it will go well with you.*

*PRAYER*

Help me Lord to trust in you, and when temptations come my way help me to lean on your wisdom and strength, and remember your faithfulness and love for me. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

When were you tested and God provided a way out?

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# Lent 2022 – Day 19

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

### THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT - Day 19 STAND FIRM



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***FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING***

Luke 4:16-22

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

***THE FULFILLMENT***

Jesus has returned to the Galilee from the wilderness *filled with the power of the Spirit*. (Luke 4:14) Word is spreading throughout the region about him, and he comes to Nazareth, his hometown and enters the synagogue where he is handed the scroll from which to read.

We don't know anything from scripture about Jesus' life from the time he was twelve (Luke 2:41-52) until he begins his ministry at thirty. So there is a lot we don't know about Jesus' formative years.

When I think of my own formative years between the ages of twelve and thirty, there were periods that definitely were wilderness times: dangerous times, times when temptations overcame me, and times when I was able to resist. And so when I think about the people who knew me during those years it is not surprising that many of them did not understand my *conversion*. My outlook on life and my lifestyle changed drastically, but they still remembered that *other* person. Some could only talk about it this way: She *got religion*.

Those who knew me well could see the *real* me beginning to blossom, but for many it was, and still is, a mystery. So it not surprising that when Jesus returns to his hometown, *filled with the power of the*

Holy Spirit, and identifies himself as one *anointed to bring good news to the poor...sent to proclaim release to the captives...to restore sight to the blind, and to bring justice to the oppressed*, the townspeople just have a hard time wrapping their minds around that...but this is *Joseph's son*...

*PRAYER*

Almighty God, you can transform each and every one of us into who you want us to be. Allow your Spirit to change us in ways that reveal your power and glory, and make us faithful servants for your purpose. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

When have you emerged *from the wilderness* a different person?

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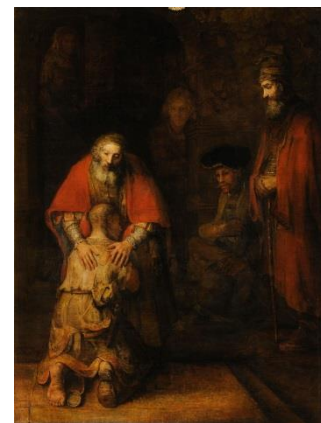
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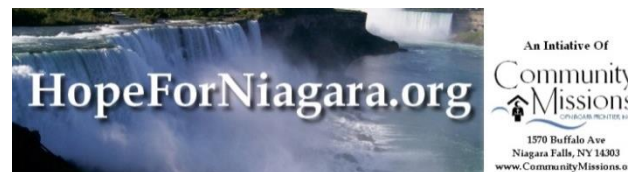
# Lent 2022 – Day 20

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

### MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING



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## TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK - Day 21

*DOING, DOING, DOING*

Matthew 7:21-27

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers."

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on the house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell - and great was its fall!"

### *LISTEN AND HEAR*

There is more to following Jesus than being a perpetual motion machine. Henri Nouwen<sup>ii</sup> talks frequently about being in communion with God. Nouwen says that "A lot of people are asking for the spiritual life and what they really want is to feel good about themselves." What some fail to realize is that doing God's will comes from being in relationship and communion with God. We cannot know God's will for us unless we spend time getting to know God.

Jesus uses the illustration of a man who builds his house on a rock. Nouwen sees how Jesus chooses his twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-19) as an apt illustration of the rock:

"At night he went up to the mountain to pray. In the morning...he called his disciples together. In the afternoon he went out with them...preached the word of God and healed the sick... Communion with God, community, ministry. That is the order of things...pray...form community, and then with community to minister." But we reverse it: we want to do things and then when they don't work, we ask the community, and then when that doesn't work we pray about it.

If we want to *do the will* of God, as Jesus did, then we must foster a relationship with God, as Jesus did. Nouwen suggests we use the order that he sees Jesus using in order to seek God’s guidance for action. Nouwen’s whole premise is that *we are God’s beloved*, and God wants to spend time with those whom he loves. That is the rock on which we stand. When we spend time with loved ones, then we can most effectively serve and minister on their behalf.

*PRAYER*

Heavenly Father, lead my heart to pursue your presence. Help me to “claim my beloved-ness” in you and seek to do your will from that place in your heart. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

In what ways do you *claim your belovedness* in God?

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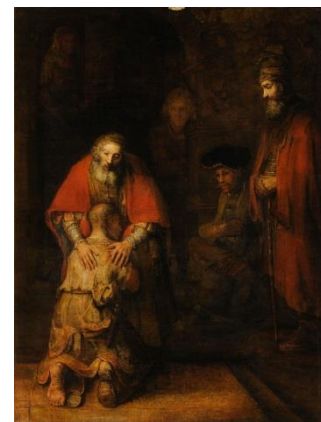
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# Lent 2022 – Day 21

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

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## WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK - Day 22

### *HEAR AND BE BLESSED*

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you...

See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

### *PASSING THE TORCH*

As Moses is preparing the Israelites to enter the land promised to them, "these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan - in the wilderness...in the land of Moab:" (Deut. 1:1, 5) And then the book of Deuteronomy proceeds to repeat for the people the abridged version of the law of God as laid out in the previous four books: God's statutes and ordinances, which they are to observe diligently. It is sound instruction from the man who has led them out of their slavery in Egypt, and mediated and advocated for them with God throughout their forty years in the wilderness.

Now Moses is getting ready to leave them. He will *not* accompany them into the promised land; he has been told to pass the torch to Joshua. And so Moses speaks his final words to the people, *just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you...*

Jesus says a similar thing to his disciples after his resurrection, when he is preparing for his ascension into heaven. He meets with his

disciples in the upper room and says to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And he breathes on them and they receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:21-22) And so the torch is passed onto the disciples. They are in charge of passing on the entire law as fulfilled in Jesus, the abridged version relayed in one word: Love. And so throughout the generations, the torch is passed now onto *us*: *Watch yourselves closely, don't forget what you have seen, observe diligently the statutes and ordinances God has give you, tell these thing to your children and grandchildren.*

*PRAYER*

Almighty God, may we heed the wisdom of your statutes and ordinances, living out the law of Love that we see in your Son Jesus the Christ. Help us to be faithful to that witness. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

Name one thing you did today to share the Love of Christ.

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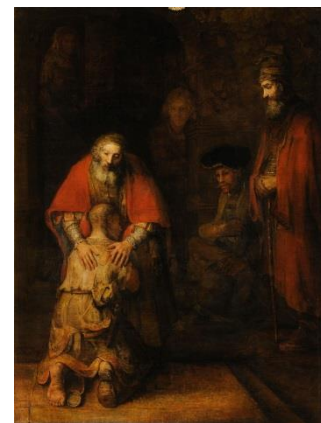
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<sup>1</sup>*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989, p. 2293  
<sup>1</sup>Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 123.  
<sup>11</sup>Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992.

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## THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK - Day 23

*FIRST: SEEK THE KINGDOM*

Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

*STRIVE FOR THE KINGDOM*

Prior to this text Jesus warns against "storing up treasures on earth" and instructs us to "store up treasure in heaven."

(6:19-20). Later on he says, "You cannot serve God and wealth." (6:24)

Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus says the kingdom is *near, here, and within us*. The kingdom is community; it is the beloved, peaceable kingdom where everyone is fed and clothed and no one goes without. It seems in our society that the kingdom of God is so far away that we can't even see it; and yet Jesus says it is near, and we must strive for it and meditate on it, because it is *within us*, within our grasp.

*Striving for the kingdom* means putting someone else's needs above our own. *Striving for the kingdom* means working for justice where

we see injustice; it means when we have two coats we give away one; it means buying groceries for our hungry neighbor; it means being a point of contact (using what influence and connections we have) to get someone a job so they can have stability and dignity of feeding their family. Our society is not set up to be the kingdom, but it could be—the kingdom is within us. We need to help bring it into being. We who call ourselves Christian must work to usher in the kingdom, one where people do not need to worry about clothing, or food, or shelter—a kingdom where a rescue mission *goes out of business* because no one is in need.

*PRAYER*

God of Justice, enable me to use the kingdom within me to usher in the kingdom here *on earth as it is in heaven*. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

List one thing you can do to bring the kingdom of God near?

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# Lent 2022 - Day 23

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

### THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK STRIVE FOR THE KINGDOM



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.

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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](http://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 THE THIRD WEEK - Day 24

### *RETURN TO THE LORD*

Hosea 14:1-4

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,  
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Take words with you

and return to the LORD;

say to him,

"Take away all guilt;

accept that which is good,

and we will offer the fruit of our lips.

Assyria shall not save us;

we will not ride upon horses;

we will say no more, 'Our God,'

to the work of our hands.

In you the orphan finds mercy."

I will heal their disloyalty;

I will love them freely,

for my anger has turned from them.

### *UNCONDITIONAL LOVE*

Why does God do it? Why does God, throughout all these generations, put up with his people? God doesn't really *need* us - God created the whole world and everything in it. It is so

evenly balanced in fact, that it would run just fine on its own - except that God's last creation - human beings - were added to the mix. So why does God continue to seek us, continue to work with us, continue to change God's mind about destroying us? Catherine of Siena says it is because, "God has fallen [madly] in love with what he has made!"<sup>1</sup>

Catherine claims our God: the eternal, infinite, wise, beautiful, merciful, charitable, generous, Father God who gives us refuge and hope and is eternally good; is "drunk with desire" for our salvation. When we run away God comes looking for us, and when we stray God draws us even closer. The evidence of God's amazing and unconditional love for us is found in Jesus the Christ. God's ultimate act of

love was to “clothe [God’s self] in our humanity,” to become one *with* us through his Son, to walk with us and show us the way to *live* the kingdom. So great is God’s love for God’s creation!

*PRAYER*

Merciful Lord, help us to be merciful as you are merciful, loving as you are loving, and forgiving as you are forgiving. Do not give up on us, but reveal to us your wisdom and with discernment help us to usher in your kingdom, that all may know Love because we are followers of you. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

Name one guilt that still needs healing, and one way that you have returned to the Lord from a time of wandering away.

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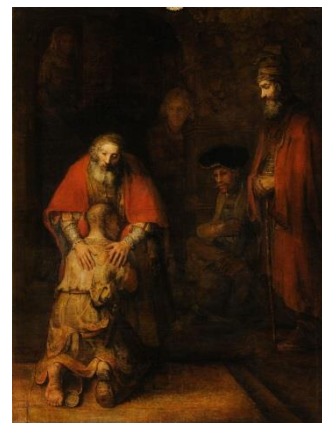
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# Lent 2022 – Day 24

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

### FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK UNCONDITIONAL LOVE



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## SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK - Day 25

### *REJOICE AND BE FREE*

*Psalm 51:7-15*

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return you.  
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.  
O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.

### *READINESS*

The Psalmist asks to be *purged with hyssop*. Hyssop was used as a sign of purification, its stems were used to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts of the Israelites at the Passover. It was used to sprinkle blood and water as a sign that a leper had been cleansed, or a home had been sanctified. A vinegar soaked sponge on a hyssop branch was offered to Jesus as he hung on the cross. The purpose of *purging with hyssop* would to drive out impurity and then to use the hyssop as a symbol of that purification.

When we ask God to *Create a clean heart...and put a new and right spirit within us*, we pray for the *readiness* or *willingness* to accept God's will for our lives, we pray for a heart that is free from the desire for retribution, and a spirit that is steadfast in love for all of God's creation.

But opening ourselves up to God's desire is risky. It leaves us vulnerable to those who would use our willingness against us. It leaves us open to persecution, misunderstanding, and perhaps even *crushed bones* and *bloodshed*. Yes, opening ourselves up to God's desire - or surrendering to God's will - is risky. But it is worth the risk to rejoice in the freedom of deliverance from all of these things, and praising God with a pure heart!

*PRAYER*

God of mercy and all righteousness, give me the courage and strength to look inside myself and have you cleanse my heart. Make me a faithful witness to your never-ending love and sustain me with your presence always. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

How has God put a new and right spirit within you?

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# Lent 2022 – Day 25

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

### SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK READINESS



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