

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]

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT - Day 26

LEAVING HOME

Luke 15:11-20a

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father."

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Henri Nouwen in *The Return of the Prodigal Son*^{ll} puts himself in the parable, in this case in the part of the younger son. He says, "Over and over again I have left home. I have fled the hands of blessing and run off to faraway places searching for love! This is the great tragedy of my life and of the lives of so many I meet on my journey. Somehow I have become deaf to the voice that calls me the Beloved, have left the only place where I can hear that voice, and have gone off desperately hoping that I would find somewhere else what I could no longer find at home." (p. 39)

Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, we leave the comfort of what we know, searching "over the rainbow" only to discover that, in the end, there is *no place like home*. And along the way we are hurt and wounded, impoverished even, but without this wounding we do not mature and grow.

As God's beloved children we have choices, some call it *free will*. Our free will can lead us into some pretty dark places but God al-

lows that to happen, because God's hopes that our suffering will lead us home again, into his loving arms. And there, wounded and broken, we bow down and confess: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.* And the Father, so deliriously happy to see his son or daughter alive, welcomes them home.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, wherever I stray, give me the assurance that I may always return home to you. Amen

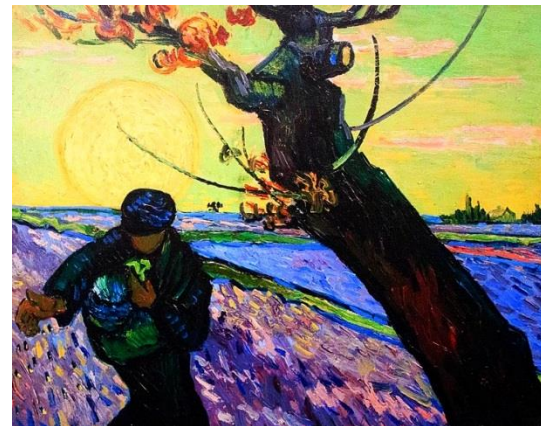
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when you have left home searching for something only to find it when you return.?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 26

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME



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)*. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.
- Prayer of Illumination adapted from, *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 125.
- The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.
- ¹*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989, p. 2293
- ¹Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 123.
- ¹¹Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992.

-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here

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]

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK - Day 27

DO NOT JUDGE

Luke 6:37-42

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

He also told them a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

SOUL SEARCH

I thank the Lord every single day for how blessed I am. And why does God bless us? God blesses us so that we may be a blessing to someone else. But in our blessedness we can get smug, so here's the thing, sometimes the hardest *judging* is for myself. We can see so much need in the world that it gets really overwhelming! We can end up feeling like we are doing nothing at all. But the solution, I think, is to focus our energy on things we can do something *about*, and leave the rest to God.

Pastors, and other people in the helping professions, meet all kinds of people; some just need a leg up in order to get their life back together and some, no matter how much you *help*, will always need some kind of assistance. I once, through the grace of God, helped someone get their life back together, or so I thought. We kept in touch for a while and he seemed to be doing ok, although he had gone back with his ex-wife, the one who had rocked his world when I met him. Although I didn't think this was a good idea he seemed fine. We stayed in touch for a while and then lost contact. I even found a business card with his name on it at the church and thought "he must be doing ok." I should have called him when I found the card.

Yesterday I received a letter from him - from jail - and things are not ok. To make matters worse he doesn't know how to contact me because I didn't call him when I found his business card; turns out he had lost my number. So, I am judging myself for my own easy life, and finding it hard to forgive myself for not making a simple phone call. The text says, do not judge...do not condemn...forgive... Sometimes the hardest person to apply these words to is yourself.

PRAYER

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

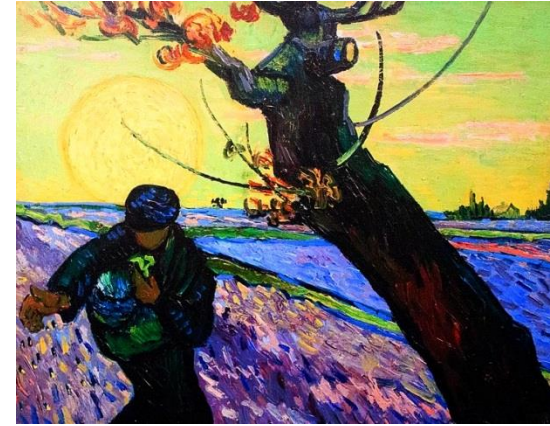
What have you had to *let go* of in order for God to help?

-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 27

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT SOUL SEARCH



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)*. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.
Prayer of Illumination adapted from, *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 125.
The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.

¹*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989, p. 2293

¹Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 123.

¹¹Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992.

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]

TUESDAY OF FOURTH WEEK - Day 28

LIGHT DISPELS DARKNESS

1 John 2:7-11

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

INTO THE LIGHT

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus the Christ, or a *Christian*? Tony Campolo wrote a book distinguishing himself as a *Red Letter Christian*. So what is the difference between a *Christian* and a *Red Letter Christian*. And there are other Christians too, there are *Evangelicals* and *Pentecostals* and *Charismatics*; as well as all of the *denominations* that fall into any one of those categories. Each person or denomination bases their belief on something, or a collection of somethings, that they have read in the Bible, or *heard* that is in there. The Bible is our leading authority on the *truth* of God. And even though faiths differ, each one thinks that they have the *truth* of the gospel: "It says it right here in the Bible," they proclaim.

According to my Study Bible' this letter of John was written over a dispute claiming "Jesus the Christ was a spirit, not a physical human being." John writes with the assurance that God is Love, and that anything that is not of love is not of God - and is therefore *darkness*. In this passage John asks us to go back to the very beginning: God called *light* into being, (Gen. 1:3) and the *light* came into the darkness. And God called it good.

Then comes Jesus saying, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) John says you can't hate and be in the light, because God is light,

and God is love. John refers to the old and new commandment as one and true. Jesus says the greatest commandment is *two*: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40) Jesus is the *light of the world*, the light came into the darkness, and God called it good. We call it Love. They’ll know we are Christians by our Love.

PRAYER

Whatever our faith tradition, Almighty God, let it be one in which your light and love for all creation shine forth. Amen

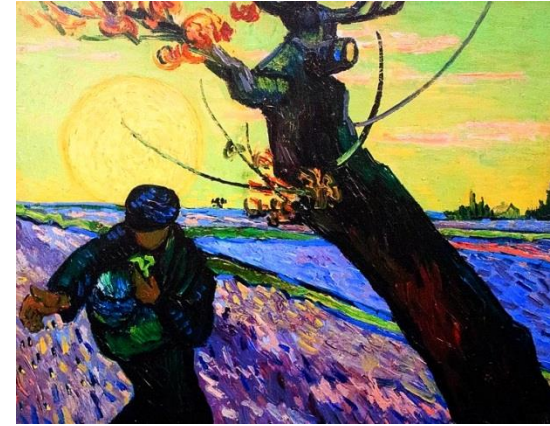
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Recall a time in your life when God dispelled hatred with understanding.

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 28

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK *INTO THE LIGHT*



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)*. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.
- Prayer of Illumination adapted from, *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 125.
- The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.
- ¹*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989, p. 2293
- ¹Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 123.
- ¹¹Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992.

-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here

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]

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK - Day 29

SPIRITUAL WISDOM

1 Corinthians 2:6-10, 13-16

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God...And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritual discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord. So as to instruct him?"

But we have the mind of Christ.

SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS

When people learn that I am a pastor, if they themselves do not 'go to church' then they will often follow it up with, "I'm spiritual but not religious." And that may be very true. There may be a spiritual component to their lives that they rely on very much to inform decisions about how they are to live their lives. But I wonder about their definition of religion. For me religion is a discipline that keeps me connected to my spirituality. I need the daily discipline of sitting with scripture - the major tool for both my religion *and* my spirituality - in order to be reminded *daily* that there is a power greater than *me* out there; that the world does not revolve around me.

My daily reading of scripture informs my faith in God even as the Holy Spirit leads me to a greater understanding of the *relevance* of my religion in the world around me. My daily reading of scripture reminds me that there are things that I cannot explain going on in this world, and that there are mysteries beyond my understanding. My discipline provides evidence that forces are at work that I cannot even fathom, forces that bring blessing out of tragedy and sometimes, tragedy out of blessing. *For who has known the mind of the Lord. So as to instruct him?* And so those of us who are spiritual *and* religious dwell in the mystery of God's *wisdom*, and trust in God's *glory* as revealed in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

PRAYER

Strengthen me, Lord, to see your glory revealed in all things; and let your Holy Spirit guide me through it all. Amen

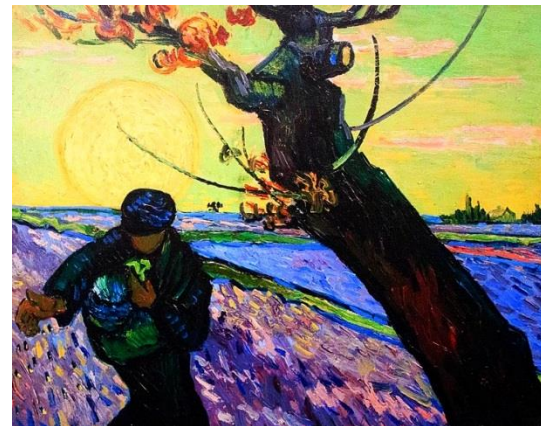
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

How do you live your faith: spiritually or religiously or both?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 29

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS



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.

**One Day At A Time In Al-Anon*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 1996, pg. 368-369. [ISBN:0-910034-63-X Large Print]

**James C. Howell, *Servants, Misfits, and Martyrs*, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1999. Pg 26-28

-----fold here
-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here
-----fold here

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 FOURTH WEEK - Day 30

WHAT DO THEY HAVE AGAINST YOU?

Matthew 5:21-24

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

BE RECONCILED

I know when someone has done something against *me*—something for which I am called to *forgive*. But do I always know when I have done something to someone else? Jesus says if I *remember that I have*, then I must go and make amends.

This is consistent with the 12-Step program of Alcoholic's Anonymous* - a program that claims to be *spiritual but not religious*:

- Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Notice that *six* out of the twelve steps are about making direct amends! One thing that stands out to me in these steps is the *willingness* and *readiness* that must be in place in order for one to accomplish this task. The 12-Step program illustrates the complexity of our actions,

and the difficulty of untangling some of the webs of deceit that we weave into our lives.

It is easy for us to look at The 12-Step program and console ourselves by saying that “well of course if you’re an *alcoholic or drug addict* you have things to confess,” but Jesus does not so easily let us off the hook. Jesus says anger, insults, name calling, all must be reconciled. This humbles us, and reminds us that we are not perfect, helps us to realize that we are *all* imperfect creatures in need of God’s mercy and dependent upon God’s grace. And *that* realization can change our hearts. The Apostle Paul spoke the truth: “There is no one who is righteous, not even one...” (Romans 3:10)

PRAYER

Show me, Lord, how I have hurt my brother or sister. Give me the courage to see it, and the strength to make amends. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

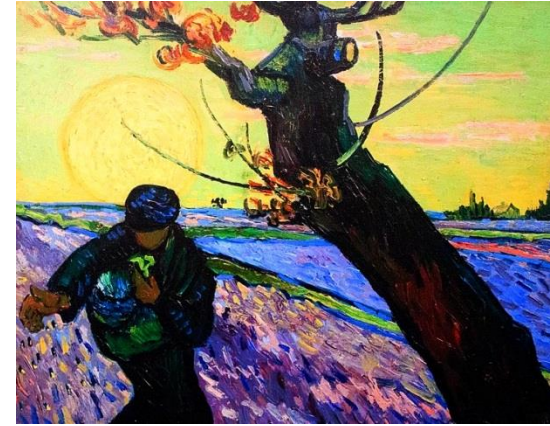
Recall a time when your wronged someone. What would it take to reconcile with that person?

-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 30

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK BE RECONCILED



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.

**One Day At A Time In Al-Anon*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 1996, pg. 368-369. [ISBN:0-910034-63-X Large Print]

**James C. Howell, *Servants, Misfits, and Martyrs*, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1999. Pg 26-28

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 THE FOURTH WEEK - Day 31

MESSIANIC RIDDLE

John 7:33-39

Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, "You will search for me and you will not find me" and "Where I am, you cannot come?"

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

PLAINLY SPEAKING...

Was Jesus intentionally being obscure? It seems to me when I read some of the things Jesus says, that Jesus expects those who listen to him to search beneath the surface for answers. It's almost like it's a private joke, where you have to know some background in order to understand. It is worth noting that already there is talk of a plot to kill Jesus.

The setting for this text is the Festival of Booths. This is a harvest festival that takes place in the fall of the year. *On the last day of the festival, the great day*, the 14th chapter of Zechariah is always read. It highlights the events of the day of the Lord's victory, "On that day *living waters shall flow* out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one." (Zechariah 14:8-9)

When Jesus puts out a call for the thirsty to come and drink; and proclaims *rivers of living water shall flow from the believer's heart*, the Jews in the crowd hear this as the reigning in of the kingdom of God

when there will be peace in Jerusalem. The implication here is that *Jesus* is the one chosen to reign it in.

And so there is disbelief and division among the people. In the next paragraph we see them begin to reason among themselves why this can't be so, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?" (John 7:41) And remember Nathaniel's question a few chapters previous, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth [of Galilee]?" (John 1:46) And so they continue to question if Jesus is the Messiah. Our own *believer's heart* knows that it is true.

PRAYER

Father God, please lend your understanding to the scripture set before us. In Your Son Jesus name we pray, Amen

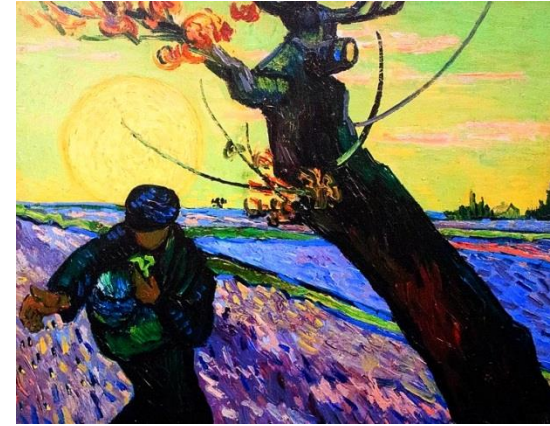
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

How do you explain "Jesus" from your *believer's heart*?

-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here

Lent 2022 – Day 31

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK PLAINLY SPEAKING...



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.

**One Day At A Time In Al-Anon*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 1996, pg. 368-369. [ISBN:0-910034-63-X Large Print]

**James C. Howell, *Servants, Misfits, and Martyrs*, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1999. Pg 26-28

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

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]

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK - Day 32

WASH FEET

John 13:12-17

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

MORE THAN SYMBOLIC

What do you think about touching someone's feet? Perhaps you don't mind that much if someone bathes daily and you know they change their socks everyday, and that their shoes are dry. But what about a *homeless* person's feet that have been walking the streets for days on end. Feet in socks that have not been changed in a week or more. Feet in sweat-soaked socks stiff from being trapped in those shoes for weeks on end. Feet in shoes that have seen more puddles and dirt than even the most playful puppy! What about washing *those* feet?

My son has spent a fair amount of time drug addicted, homeless, and in shelters. He has a memory of a time when a church visited the Mission where he was staying. He said, "Mom, they washed people's feet! They brought clean socks and new shoes and they removed our old socks and shoes and put our feet in warm soapy water and washed our feet, dried them and gave us new socks and shoes!" He was astonished that people would ever do that knowing how bad his own feet were at the time. It made an impression on him that he will remember forever - the kindness of those people who cared enough to wash a homeless person's feet!

Following Jesus is REAL. It's not theory - it's PRACTICE. It's not just preaching it but DOING IT! And the witness it gives to the love and compassion of Christ for those who most people prefer to not even *see* is the greatest testimony one can give.

If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

PRAYER

Almighty God, help me to see your face in all people. Help me to respond with generosity and a loving and hopeful word. Help me to be your faithful servant always, joyfully serving you always. Amen

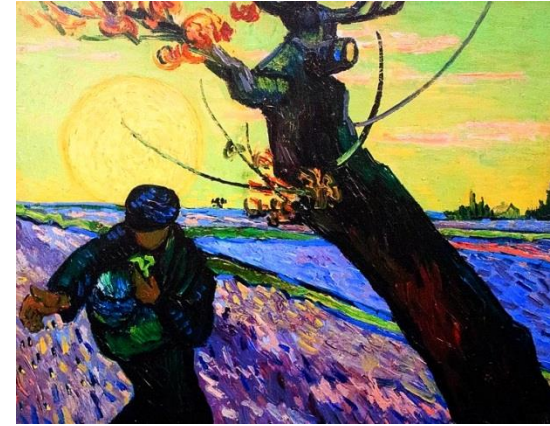
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when you did something you did not want to do simply because Jesus called you to do it.

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 32

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK MORE THAN SYMBOLIC



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.

**One Day At A Time In Al-Anon*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 1996, pg. 368-369. [ISBN:0-910034-63-X Large Print]

**James C. Howell, *Servants, Misfits, and Martyrs*, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1999. Pg 26-28

-----fold here
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here