

Introduction To This Guide

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Where Do I Begin?

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Let us Pray a *Prayer of Illumination*:

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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]

EASTER SUNDAY - Day 47

HALLELUJA: CHRIST IS RISEN

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers - all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

NEW LIFE

At what point does the truth of Christ become real for us? For each one of us there is a particular moment in time when each of us truly knows Jesus as the Christ. This is not to say we totally understand him, or can begin to know the depth of love and pain that God experienced by allowing his son to live among us. That is not to say that we understand anything about any of that. But it is just to say that there is a moment for those of us who believe when we say, "Ah hah, I get it."

I remember my moment. I was a young mother of two sons and we were in a music store looking for a piece of music to augment my son's piano lesson. There we were looking at sheet music and I looked over at a rack of *witness wear* t-shirts. We had been attending church as a family for a year or so and I was pretty involved in Sunday School and worship. I taught the youngest class, and was invested in researching what it might have been like for Jesus' to have once been a little child just like them.

So we're in the Music Store and I see a black t-shirt that has a white transparent image of a face with a crown of thorns. In green letters it asks: "What has God ever done for you?" I am haunted by the image as I turn the shirt over to see the answer printed in green text on the back, "He gave his only son that whosoever believeth in him shall have eternal life." And THAT hit home for me; me and my two sons. Would I give even *one* of my sons to save the world? I suddenly saw

the pain God bore as he watched his son being misunderstood and maligned. Then to watch as his perfect and sinless boy was accused, betrayed, abused, beaten, whipped, spit on, and finally nailed to a cross. God's own created beings capable of such love and devotion, as well as such hatred and torture! I can only imagine God sobbed in searing agony that day! And yet, the mystery is that by way of that cross, *the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*, and life after death was affirmed in the resurrection of Christ Jesus, *the firstborn from the dead*. Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Halleluia!

PRAYER

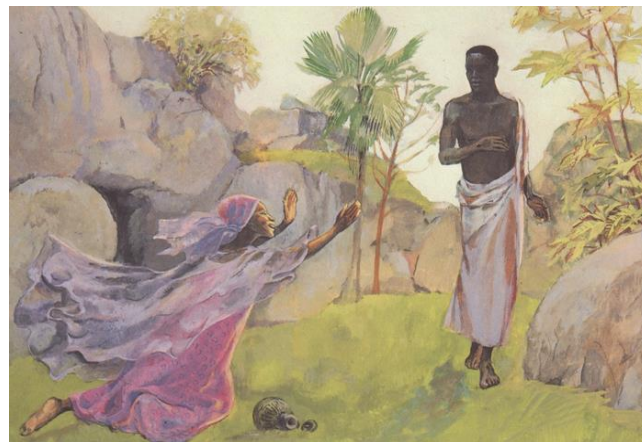
“Reconcile [us] today, Lord Jesus...to your Father. In the power of the Holy Spirit whom you have sent to renew us in freedom and joy through the mystery of your resurrection from the dead.”**** In you Holy name we pray. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

What was the particular moment when you believed?.

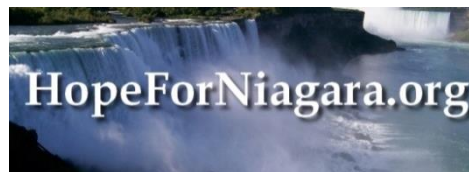
Easter Sunday – Day 47

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

EASTER SUNDAY NEW LIFE



An Initiative Of
Community Missions
PUBLISHED WEEKLY
1570 Buffalo Ave
Niagara Falls, NY 14303
www.CommunityMissions.org

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- *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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MONDAY OF EASTER WEEK - Day 48

NOT CONDEMNED

Romans 8:1-4, 14-17

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending this own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit...

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Thomas Merton, the monk whose study on whom these Daily Reflections were inspired, carries his study through this first week of Easter. We too, must carry our study and reflections beyond the Lent and Easter event.

Merton, reflecting on the Lenten Season, says that it reminds us "all too clearly of our own powerlessness to change our lives in any way. Lent...convinces us of our sin and inflicts upon us the crushing evidence of our own nothingness."* And so Lent serves in a way as law, convicting us of our own unrighteousness and accentuating our need of a savior.

The emotional highs and lows of Holy Week mirror the highs and lows of our everyday lives. We rejoice and we despair, we have a sense of security and we fear for our very lives, we mourn and we dance. But through it all we have the assurance in the resurrected Christ that we are not condemned to death: *the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and of death*. So how does knowing that change us? Is not the whole point of Lent that we be changed; that we somehow see our own sinfulness and gain humility and patience and

have love for one another? In the coming days, let us *walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit* and let love and unity reign in our hearts. As the popular hymn proclaims: “We are one in the Spirit we are one in the Lord...And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.”** The Christ died and was raised to life that it may be so. “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”**

PRAYER

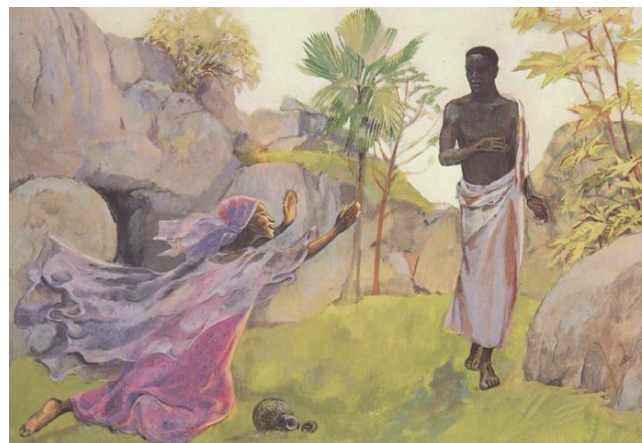
I cannot “free myself from my habitual return to fear...lack of hope...and guilt” without you. “Open my mind and heart this Easter to the reality that the Holy Spirit empowers me to free myself in truth by love and service for others. Set me free to love and serve.”^a Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Now that we are on the other side of Lent, how has this journey changed you? How has it not changed you?

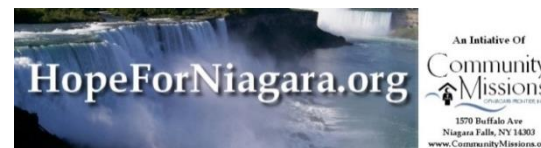
First Monday of Easter – Day 48

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

EASTER MONDAY WALK IN THE SPIRIT



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TUESDAY OF EASTER WEEK - Day 49

RENEWED IN CHRIST

Colossians 3:11-17

In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

NEW STRENGTH

Easter delivers us from harsh judgment through the mercy and forgiveness of Christ. Our text talks about renewal: a renewed heart and spirit. It says, *bear with one another*. Bear your neighbor's burden, walk with them through their valleys, scale the mountain together, endure the highs and lows of life in community - let no one be forced to go it alone.

With Christ in our lives we have a new strength "a strength which is not our own, which is given to us whenever we need it...through his merciful love for us."^a

In the coming weeks may our hearts be renewed through our faith in the presence of the Christ among us. Let us be guided to a deeper understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit within us. May we hear the resurrected Christ speak to us in ways that deepen our knowledge of God's will for our lives. *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...And whatever you do, in*

word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

PRAYER

“I have much to learn. Continue, in your mysterious wisdom, to send teachers into my life, no matter how young or old, who will teach me compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. I am a ready student; let my teachers come.”^a Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

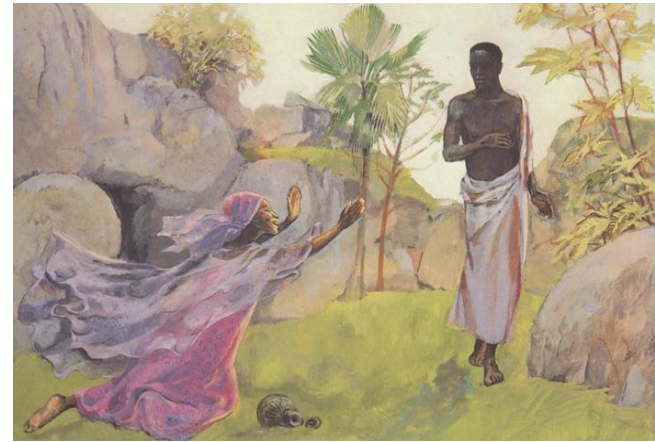
Explain how you have been renewed this Easter?

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First Tuesday of Easter – Day 49

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TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

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WEDNESDAY OF EASTER WEEK - Day 50

HE IS OUR PEACE

Ephesians 2:14-22

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

ACCEPT RECONCILIATION AND PEACE

We are reconciled: *both groups to God in one body through the cross*. So why do so many not accept this reconciliation, this peace? The Christ has suffered, he has shown us the error of our ways. He has shown us that peace comes not with guns and swords and a heavily armed militia; but with love and mercy and forgiveness, through God's grace. And yet we still fight wars with guns and swords and a heavily armed militia, trying to muscle our way into peaceful negotiations. Jesus has shown us war does not bring peace. Fear and hatred need to be converted into security and wholeness. Craving and hoarding must be transformed through sharing and fair distribution. Jealousy and resentment need to be laid down in order to make way for peace.

I am reminded of that old song from the early 1970's, *One Tin Soldier*,^{aa} about two peoples: a mountain people and a valley people. The mountain people had a treasure and the valley people wanted it. So the valley people sent a message telling the mountain people they wanted their treasure. The valley people offered to share it, but the mountain people wanted it all. So they grabbed their weapons and killed all the mountain people. "Now they stood beside the treasure on

the mountain, dark and red; turned the stone and looked beneath it 'Peace on Earth' was all it said."

Likewise, they crucified the Christ. He hung on the cross, covered in blood "dark and red," and he forgave those who crucified him. On Resurrection Day, upon meeting his disciples in the upper room, he proclaimed "peace be upon them" and sent them out. (John 20:22) And even though division still exists between peoples, those true to his word still work to reconcile proclaiming, *he is our peace.*

PRAYER

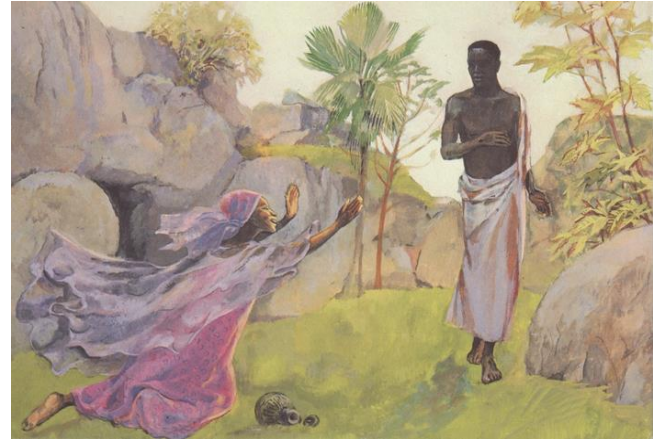
May we always seek oneness in Christ Jesus. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Seek peace in a situation that needs reconciling.

First Wednesday of Easter – Day 50

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER HE IS OUR PEACE



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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

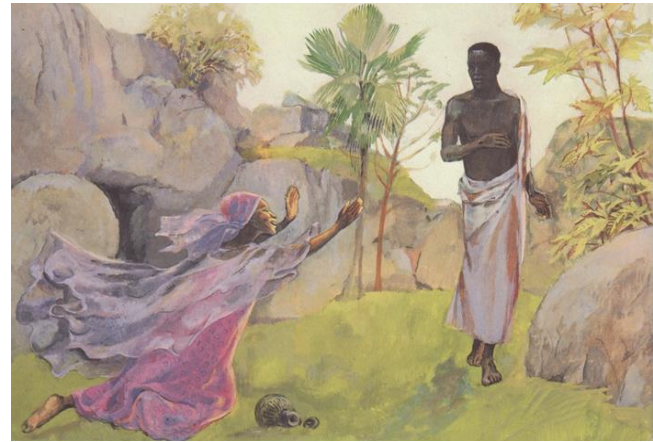
Thank you Lord for your precious gift and help me to always count my blessings: I lamented because I had no shoes, and then I saw a man who had no feet. Amen

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.

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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

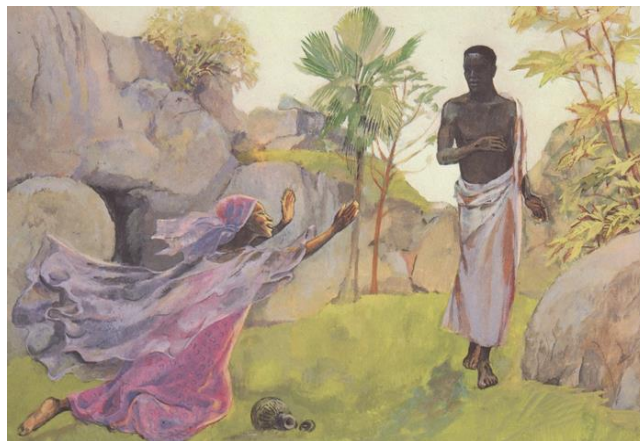
Free me from self-indulging behaviors, let me not deny myself only to be seen by others, but free me in service only for your glory, dear Lord. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

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

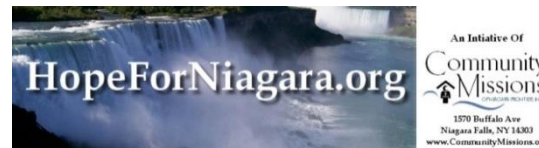
First Friday of Easter – Day 52

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

FRIDAY AFTER EASTER WHAT DID YOU “GIVE UP”



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Your Word and the touch of your Spirit bring healing...

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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 EASTER WEEK - Day 53

THE SONG OF ZECHARIAH

Luke 1:68-79

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has
looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from
of old, that we would be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us.
Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that
we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow
of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

ECSTASY

For almost a year, since the angel's visitation pronouncing that his aging and barren wife Elizabeth will bear a child, Zechariah has been unable to utter a sound. Now, on the eighth day after the child's birth, the day of John's circumcision, "his tongue is freed and he begins to speak, praising God." (Luke 1:64) Imagine the ecstasy of that moment, dwelling in the midst of the time of fulfillment! The very moment when you realize that while you are alive you will see the consummation of the hope of the people of Israel - a savior in the line of the house of David is dawning, and your own son John is *the* prophet spoken of

through the words of *The Prophets*, who will go before him and prepare the way. (Isaiah 40:3-5, Malachi 3:1)

And John did indeed prepare the way, and the Christ did indeed *give light to those who sat in darkness*: “the blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf [were made to] hear, the dead were raised, and the poor had good news brought to them.” (Luke 7:22)

And Jesus was crucified, died, and laid in a tomb; but the Easter miracle is that he lives, and *by the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us...to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

PRAYER

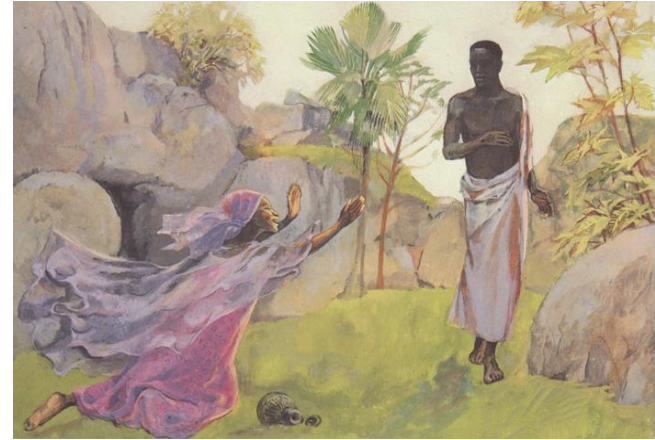
““Morning has broken like the first morning...Born of the one light Eden saw play. Praise with elation, praise every morning, God’s recreation of the new day.”” Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

How has John prepared the way for your heart to receive the peace of Christ Jesus?

First Saturday of Easter – Day 53

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

SATURDAY AFTER EASTER ECSTASY



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SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER - Day 54

PRESSING ON

Philippians 3:7-16

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

THE GOAL

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him...having a righteousness [from God]... that comes through faith in Christ. Therefore, the goal is to be in Christ Jesus and to make him our own life because Christ Jesus has made us his own.

I read recently that "Christ in me" is not an impossible ideal. "Christ in me" means Christ bearing me along from within...[it is] the motive power that carries me on...giving my whole life a wonderful poise and lift, and turning every burden into wings...To be 'in Christ,' to have Christ within, is to realize your [faith] not as something you have to bear but as something by which you are borne, this is Christianity. [But] it is more: it is release and liberty, life with an endless song at its heart. It means feeling within you, as long as life here lasts, the

carrying power of Love Almighty; and underneath you, when you come to die, the touch of everlasting arms.”¹¹

PRAYER

“And God will lift you up on eagle’s wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God’s hand.”¹² Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

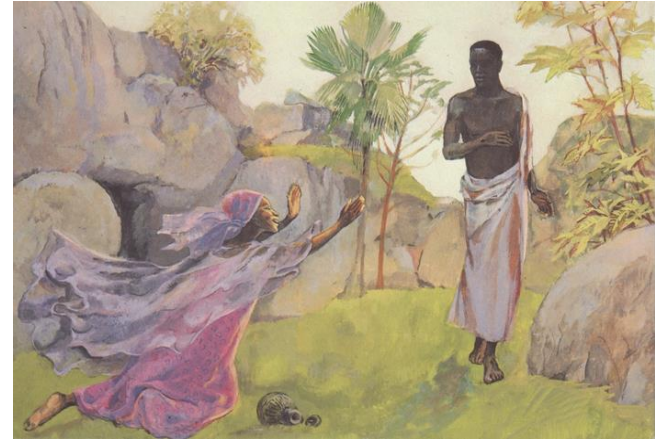
Make a plan for how you will continue to nurture your faith, maturing and growing in Christ and with Christ *holding fast to what you have attained.*

Thank you for spending the past 54 days of devotion and prayer with us. We pray that your journey through Lent and into Easter has brought you closer to our Risen Lord, Jesus the Christ.

*Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow
Rev. Mark H. Breese*

Second Sunday of Easter – Day 54

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



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

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE GOAL



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