



OUR
JOURNEY
INTO
Mystery

DAILY LENTEN REFLECTIONS BY
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INTRODUCTION

Each Lent, we renew our effort to use the daily scripture readings as the key to deepening our relationship to God by imitating Jesus' example. Our morning and evening prayer are the hinges on which our daily relationship with Jesus revolves. The daily reflections in this booklet help us take the daily Mass readings and connect them with the treasures of our spiritual tradition. Their insight and wisdom help us see more deeply into the meaning of God's Word, and hear more clearly the challenge that still echoes down the centuries from Jesus himself to each of us: "Change your lives and follow me!" Reflecting each day on both God's Word and their wisdom, we become more what we are called to be: disciples, learners in the school of grace, bearers of Christ's image for the world, and the only gospel some people will ever read.

As we take time each day to move along on our Lenten journey to Easter using these reflections, we will have the opportunity to reorient our lives by deepening our intimate communion with God, considering God's vision of what our world is like because of God's mysterious presence, rethinking our values and changing our behavior because of our relationship with God and Jesus.

Reading and pondering the words of the Bible and these spiritual reflections leads us from our familiar ordinary, material, external world to an unfamiliar extraordinary, spiritual, mysterious inner world where God dwells and invites us to remain. But nothing happens unless we decide to draw nearer to God's loving mystery. I hope you enjoy your journey.

—Steve Mueller, Editor



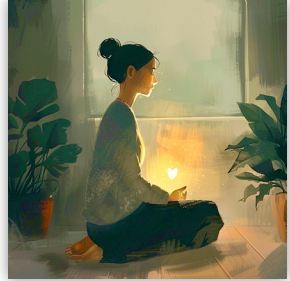
Ash Wednesday

GO TO YOUR INNER ROOM

"When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret."

(Matthew 6:4)

This is the invitation that Jesus addresses to each of us at the beginning of the Lenten journey. Going to your inner room means turning within to the heart of your true self. It means journeying from without to within, so that your whole life, including your relationship with God, is not reduced to mere outward show, a frame without a picture, a draping of the soul, but is born from within and reflects the movements of your heart, your deepest desires, your thoughts, your feelings, the very core of your person. Lent helps us to remove all the cosmetics that we use in order to appear presentable, better than we really are. To return to your heart means to go back to your true self and to present it just as it is, naked and defenseless, in the sight of God. It means looking within yourself and acknowledging your real identity, removing the masks you so often wear, slowing the frantic pace of your life and embracing life and the truth of who you are. Lent invites us to return to our heart, to the reality of who we are: a return to the heart and the truth.



—*Pope Francis*

What practical things might I do this Lent to spend time alone with God in prayer?

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Thursday after Ash Wednesday

TAKE TIME ALONE WITH GOD

"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." (Mark 6:31)

Everything starts from prayer. Without asking God for love, we cannot possess love and still less are we able to give it to others. Just as people today are speaking so much about the poor and yet they do not know the poor, we too cannot talk so much about prayer and yet not know how to pray. You may be exhausted with work, you may even overwork yourself, but unless your work is interwoven with love, it is useless. To work without love is slavery. We too are called to withdraw at certain intervals into deeper silence and aloneness with God, together as a community as well as person-

ally. To be alone with him, not with our books, thoughts, and memories but completely stripped of everything, to dwell lovingly in his presence—silent, empty, expectant, and motionless.

—*St. Mother Teresa*

What is most difficult for me in paying attention to God during my prayer time? Why?

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Friday after Ash Wednesday

LIVING HERE & NOW WITH GOD

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." (Mark 6:31)

The invitation to a life of prayer is the invitation to live in the midst of this world without being caught in the net of its wounds and needs. The word *prayer* stands for a radical interruption of the vicious chain of interlocking dependencies that leads to violence and war, and for an entering into an entirely new dwelling place. It points to a new way of speaking, of breathing, of being together, of knowing—truly, to a whole new way of living. It is not easy to express the radical change that prayer represents, since for many the word *prayer* is associated with piety; talking to God; thinking about God; attending morning and evening worship; going to Sunday service; saying grace before meals; and many other things. All of these have something to do with prayer, but prayer is the center of Christian life. It is living with God, here and now.

—*Henri J. M. Nouwen*

What is most challenging about being with God and focusing on the here and now?

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Saturday after Ash Wednesday

FINDING WHAT MIGHT BE MISSING

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."
(Matthew 7:7)*

When we were children we played "Hide and Seek," deliberately hiding ourselves from others and waiting for them to find us in our secret hiding places. As adults we may still be playing "Hide and Seek," only now we play it with the values and treasures of our lives, hiding or losing them in the tumble of our days. It is so easy to lose what we value. We may deeply believe in the necessity for solitude and reflection but gradually there's no space left in our day. We become so used to not having any space for soli-

tude that finally we no longer notice that it is missing. The church is wise in offering us the season of Lent because it can be the very time we need to find what is missing in our lives; it can be the season to deliberately seek what has been tossed away or misplaced or ignored, so that our lives can once again reflect the gospel which Jesus encouraged us to live. Lent can be a searching out and a restoration time and the means for renewed direction and perspective.

—Joyce Rupp

Who and what is it that I seek? that I most cherish and value? that I most hide from in myself and my life now?

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First Sunday of Lent

NOW IS A TIME OF CONVERSION

"Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!" (Mark 1:15)

Lent is a season of conversion, a time of freedom. Jesus himself, as we recall today, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us as God's incarnate Son. In Lent, we find new criteria of justice and a community with which we can press forward on a road not yet taken. It is time to act, and in Lent, to act also means to pause in prayer in order to receive the word of God. For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us. Then the atrophied and isolated heart will revive. In the presence of God, we become brothers and sisters, more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travelers. This is God's dream, the promised land to which we journey once we have left our slavery behind.



—Pope Francis

What might I most need to change in myself and my life and what steps will I take to do this?

Monday, Week 1

IN THE SILENCE OF THE HEART GOD SPEAKS

"Be still and know that I am God!" (Ps 46:11)

Silence of the heart, not only of the mouth, is necessary. Then in that silence which is wonder and praise you can hear God everywhere: in the closing of the door, in the person who needs you, in the birds that sing, in the flowers, the animals. Why? Because God is everywhere, and you can see and hear God. In the silence of the heart, God speaks to us. We need silence to be alone with God, to speak to God, to listen to God, to ponder God's words deep in our hearts. We need to be alone with God in silence to be renewed and to be transformed. Silence gives us a new outlook on life. In it we are filled with the God's grace, which makes us do all things with joy. We need to find God, and God cannot be found in noise and restlessness. See how nature, the trees, the flowers and the grass grow in perfect silence. See the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. God is the friend of silence. God's language is silence. "Be still and know that I am God." God requires us to be silent to discover him.



—*St. Mother Teresa*

How can I create more silence in myself and my life to listen more attentively to what God wants to say to me?

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Tuesday, Week 1

DARING TO BE ALONE WITH GOD

"Lord, hear my prayer; let my cry come to you." (Psalm 102:2)

It is better to have a daily practice of ten minutes' solitude than to have a whole hour once in a while to make the discipline of solitude as much part of our daily lives as eating and sleeping. When that happens, our noisy worries will slowly lose their power over us and the renewing activity of God's Spirit will slowly make its presence known. What finally matters is that our hearts become like quiet cells where God can dwell, wherever we go and whatever we do. The more we train ourselves to spend time with God alone, the more we will discover that God is with us at all times and in all places. Then we will be able to recognize God even in the midst of a busy and active life. Once the solitude of time and space has become a solitude

of the heart, we will never have to leave that solitude. We will be able to live the spiritual life in any place and any time. Thus the discipline of solitude enables us to live active lives in the world, while remaining always in the presence of the living God.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

When and how have I most experienced God's presence in me and with me?

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Wednesday, Week 1

LENT IS A TIME TO GO DEEPER

"Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!'" (Isaiah 35:4)

Lent is a summons to grow and a challenge to change. It beckons one inward. It is a move to interiority, a passage to the deeper places where we discover our authenticity, where we realize both our limitations and our grandeur. It is here that we come home to our truest Self. We take our external experiences with us to the inside and look at our life. We evaluate our goals, hopes, dreams, beliefs, behaviors, experiences—all that has marked us and contributed to the person we have become—and we ask ourselves: "Is this the person I want to be in the future?" As we go deeper, we start finding all sorts of things. Some of it is the junk of old wounds that comes to the surface and needs to be let go while other discoveries are wonderful treasures that stir us with joy. As we explore these waters, we meet strange occupants in the deeps, some of which are frightening and others enigmatically beautiful and enticing.

—Joyce Rupp

What discoveries about myself have most surprised me this Lent?

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Thursday, Week 1

ENTERING A WHOLISTIC RELATION WITH GOD

"The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans 5:5)

Christian prayer is first of all an encounter with the transcendent God. Prayer is dialogue with God. In this dialogue, God first speaks to us through God's own Word made flesh. God invites us in turn to speak to God in words that embody our deepest thoughts, emotions and experiences. In prayer, the whole person, starting from the center—the heart—enters into a relationship with God. Here, then, is the grace of Christian prayer: Christ

is not far away, but is always in a relationship with us. There is no aspect of his divine-human person that cannot become a place of salvation and happiness for us. Every moment of Jesus' earthly life, through the grace of prayer, can become immediate to us thanks to the Holy Spirit. In prayer, the Holy Spirit connects us with the mysteries of Christ's life and we are joined more closely to him. For us Christians, meditating is a way to encounter Jesus. And only in this way can we also rediscover ourselves.

—Pope Francis

When have I most sensed that Christ is drawing nearer to me through my prayer and scripture reading?

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Friday, Week 1

WHEN PRAYER IS HARD

"God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory." (Colossians 1:27)

When a time comes and we can't pray it is very simple: if Jesus is in my heart let him pray, let me allow him to pray in me, to talk to his Father in the silence of my heart. If I cannot speak, he will speak; if I cannot pray, he will pray. That's why often we should say, "Jesus in my heart, I believe in your faithful love for me." And when we have nothing to give—let us give him that nothingness. When we cannot pray—let us give that inability to him. Let him pray in us to the Father. Let us ask him to pray in us, for no one knows the Father better than he. No one can pray better than Jesus. And if my heart is pure, if in my heart is Jesus, if my heart is a tabernacle of the living God to sanctify in grace: Jesus and I are one. He prays in me, he thinks in me, he works with me and through me, he uses my tongue to speak, he uses my brain to think, he uses my hand to touch him in the broken body.

—St. Mother Teresa

How have I dealt with the dry times of my prayer this Lent? With what results?

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Saturday, Week 1

ALONE WITH GOD IN QUIET

"Rising very early before dawn, Jesus left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35)

It is better to have a daily practice of ten minutes' solitude than to have a whole hour once in a while to make the discipline of solitude as much part

of our daily lives as eating and sleeping. When that happens, our noisy worries will slowly lose their power over us and the renewing activity of God's Spirit will slowly make its presence known. What finally matters is that our hearts become like quiet cells where God can dwell, wherever we go and whatever we do. The more we train ourselves to spend time with God alone, the more we will discover that God is with us at all times and in all places. Then we will be able to recognize God even in the midst of a busy and active life. Once the solitude of time and space has become a solitude of the heart, we will never have to leave that solitude. We will be able to live the spiritual life in any place and any time. Thus the discipline of solitude enables us to live active lives in the world, while remaining always in the presence of the living God.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

What do I most need to do to set aside 10 minutes every day for time alone with God?

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2nd Sunday of Lent

OPENING THE DOOR OF MY HEART

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

When I open the door of my heart to God, I do more than simply extend a smile of recognition or a nod of welcome. I open myself to grow and change in ways I may never dream likely. I risk being spiritually transformed into a person whose life continually manifests goodness. This happens on an inner level of myself when life situations and graced moments invite me to become more fully who I am. The choices and decisions I make determine whether I'll go through the door and enter the unknown territory of growth, or turn back and cling to the safety of who I presently am. If I am alert and willing to be transformed, I open the inner door of my self and greet fresh ideas, along with possible changes in attitude and emotional responses. Whenever I choose to open the door and step across the threshold of possibility, I become more conscious of myself as a person with unlimited potential for goodness and ever fuller unity with the divine.



—Joyce Rupp

How might I open the door of my heart even wider for God to come to dwell within me?

Monday, Week 2

TURNING FROM SINFUL WAYS

"Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." (James 4:8)

Conversion of heart is the chief characteristic of this Lenten season of grace. This challenges all of us without exception, and it reminds us that conversion is not to be reduced to outward forms or to vague intentions, but engages and transforms one's entire existence beginning from the center of the person, from the conscience. Conversion is not the question of a moment or a time of the year, it is an undertaking that lasts one's entire lifetime. We are all called to abandon the behavior of sin and fix our gaze on what is essential. From the heart of the person renewed in the likeness of God comes good behavior: to speak the truth always and avoid all deceit; not to steal, but rather to share all you have with others, especially those in need; not to give in to anger, resentment and revenge, but to be meek, magnanimous and ready to forgive; not to gossip which ruins the good name of people, but to look more at the good side of everyone.

—Pope Francis

What in myself and my behavior am I most unwilling to change for the better?

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Tuesday, Week 2

PRACTICING SILENCE OF THE HEART

"A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45)

For true inner silence, practice silence of the mind, by opening it to the truth and knowledge of God in prayer and contemplation, like Mary who pondered the marvels of the Lord in her heart, and by closing it to all untruths, distractions, destructive thoughts, rash judgments, false suspicions of others, vengeful thoughts and desires. Practice silence of the heart by loving God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength; loving one another as God loves; and avoiding all selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy and greed. I shall keep the silence of my heart with greater care, so that I hear his words of comfort, and from the fullness of my heart I comfort Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor. For in the silence of the heart God speaks.

—St. Mother Teresa

How can I renew my silence of the heart even more this Lent in my prayer?

Wednesday, Week 2

RECENTERING OUR LIVES ON GOD

"Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." (Matthew 6:21)

Jesus does not respond to our worry-filled way of living by saying that we should not be so busy with worldly affairs. He does not try to pull us away from the many events, activities and people that make up our lives. He asks us to shift the point of gravity, to relocate the center of our attention, to change our priorities. Jesus in no way wants us to leave our many-faceted world. Rather, he wants us to live in it, but firmly rooted in the center of all things. Jesus does not speak about a change of activities, a change in contacts or even a change of pace. He speaks about a change of heart. This change of heart makes everything different, even while everything appears to remain the same. What counts is where our hearts are. When we worry, we have our hearts in the wrong place. Jesus asks us to move our hearts to the center, where all other things fall into place.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How is my life most decentered from my relation to God as my main priority?

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Thursday, Week 2

COME AND SEE!

*"Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"
Jesus said to them, "Come, and you will see." (John 1:38-39)*

When we choose to pray we accept the invitation to *come and see* who this God of goodness is, and to *come and see* who we are as God's cherished one. Prayer is an essential way of kindling and developing this relationship. If we are going to have quality prayer, we will need to take time to stay with the Holy One in prayer, to become familiar with the depth of Love in the center of our being. As we increasingly commit ourselves to keeping this relationship alive and thriving, not only is more of God's essence revealed but we also come to know more of our own true self. Prayer is not only about entering into a relationship with God; it is also about being changed. Healthy prayer strengthens our bond with the Creator and also transforms us. Every encounter with God provides the opportunity for us to grow spiritually. Prayer makes a difference in our life because it



nudges and persuades us to develop Christlike qualities in our attitude and actions. Through prayer we become more loving, gracious, compassionate, and justice-oriented human beings. When this happens, we are altered in a positive way and the world we touch is also changed for the better.

—Joyce Rupp

What have I most learned about my true self so far this Lent? How has that most changed me?

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Friday, Week 2

YOU ARE CHRIST'S

*"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."
(Galatians 5:24)*

Everything comes from God and is his gift: the world, life, death, the present, the future, but "you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3:23). Hence belonging to God comes about through a unique and personal relationship with Jesus, which baptism confers on us from the beginning of our rebirth to new life. Christ continually summons us by his word to place our trust in him. Therefore every vocation, even within the variety of paths, always requires an exodus from oneself in order to center one's life on Christ and on his gospel. Whether in married life, religious consecration as well as in priestly life, we must surmount the ways of thinking and acting that do not conform to the will of God. Therefore, we are all called to adore Christ in our hearts in order to allow ourselves to be touched by the impulse of grace contained in the seed of God's word, which must grow in us and be transformed into concrete service to our neighbor.

—Pope Francis

How have the changes in myself also led to changes in my behavior toward others this Lent?

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Saturday, Week 2

WAITING IN SILENCE

"For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from God." (Psalm 62:5)

If we really want to pray we must first learn to listen, for in the silence of the heart God speaks. And to be able to see that silence, to be able to hear God, we need a clean heart, for a clean heart can see God, can hear God, can listen to God. When it is difficult to pray, we must help ourselves to do so. The first means we must use to help ourselves is silence, for souls of prayer and souls of great silence. We cannot put ourselves directly in the

presence of God if we do not practice internal and external silence. God is a friend of silence. Let us adore Jesus in our hearts, who spent thirty years out of thirty-three in silence, who began his public life by spending forty days in silence, who often retired alone to spend the night on a mountain in silence. Let us adore Jesus in the eucharistic silence.

—*St. Mother Teresa*

How might I spend more time today listening quietly to God in my prayer?

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3rd Sunday of Lent

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S SPIRIT AT WORK

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father!'" (Romans 8:14-15)

Indeed, living a spiritual life requires a change of heart, a conversion. Such a conversion may be marked by a sudden inner change, or it can take place through a long, quiet process of transformation. But it always involves an inner experience of oneness. We realize that we are in the center, and that from there all that is and all that takes place can be seen and understood as part of the mystery of God's life with us. Our conflicts and pains, our tasks and promises, our families and friends, our activities and projects, our hopes and aspirations, no longer appear to us as a fatiguing variety of things which we can barely keep together, but rather as affirmations and revelations of the new life of the Spirit in us. What matters is to listen attentively to the Spirit and to go obediently where we are being led, whether to a joyful or a painful place.



—*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

When have I most felt united with God this Lent in my prayer and my daily activity?

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Monday, Week 3

THE SPARK OF GOD ALIVE IN US

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (Luke 12:49)

How do we keep the love of God aflame in us? How do we stoke the fires of our enthusiasm and passion for spiritual growth? We must stay close to the original flame of love, and draw near to the heart of God through daily

prayer and through a continual yearning to be one with the divine presence. Each time we intentionally draw near to God we light a candle in our heart. Sometimes our prayer and our desire are not enough to keep the passion for God alive in us. At these times we need to draw close to others whose hearts are on fire with God. Simply by being with them we can often catch a spark that will renew our own lost radiance. Goodness attracts goodness. Fire leaps from heart to heart. We do not know the day when the spark in us will burst into greater fire. We cannot force the flame before its time. We can only do our part and entrust the kindling to our God and the people God brings into our lives.

—Joyce Rupp

When have I most felt the spark of God's life changing me from within?

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Tuesday, Week 3

MARY OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITHFUL PRAYER

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

Let us turn in prayer to Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of our faith. Mother, help our faith! Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise. Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith. Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature. Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One. Remind us that those who believe are never alone. Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!

—Pope Francis

How might I imitate Mary's total trust and surrender to God's desire to be born in her?

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Wednesday, Week 3

PRAYING LIKE JESUS TAUGHT US

"Pray like this: Our Father...Thy will be done...Forgive us as we forgive." (Matthew:6:9-10, 12)

Where can I learn to pray? Jesus taught us to pray and it is so simple yet so beautiful. It comes throughout the day in every day of our lives. If we pray the "Our Father" and live it, we will be holy. Everything is there: God,

myself, my neighbor. If I forgive, then I can be holy and I can pray. All this comes from a humble heart and if we have this we will know how to love God, to love self and our neighbor. You see in this a simple love for Jesus. There are no complications and yet we complicate our lives so much, by so many additions. Just one thing counts: to be humble, to pray. The more you pray the better you pray. How do you pray? You should go to God like a little child. A child has no difficulty in expressing his little mind in simple words, but they express so much. If we pray, the Gospel we will allow Christ to grow in us.

—*St. Mother Teresa*

What might I want to say in my prayer today as God's beloved child?

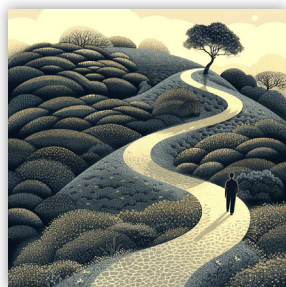
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Thursday, Week 3

BE WITH ME LORD ON MY JOURNEY

*"By day may the LORD send his mercy, and by night may his righteousness be with me!
I will pray to the God of my life." (Psalm 42:9)*

Lord, this holy season of Lent is passing quickly. I entered into it with fear, but also with great expectations. I hoped for a great breakthrough, a powerful conversion, a real change of heart; I wanted Easter to be a day so full of light that not even a trace of darkness would be left in my soul. But I know that you do not come to your people with thunder and lightning. Let me be thankful for your gentle way. I know you are at work and will not leave me alone. I know you are quickening me for Easter but in a way fitting to my own history and my own temperament. I pray that these last three weeks, in which you invite me to enter more fully into the mystery of your passion, will bring me a greater desire to follow you on the way that you create for me and to accept the cross that you give to me. Be with me tomorrow and in the days to come, and let me experience your gentle presence.



—*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

What has God most been doing within me so far this Lent to draw me closer?

Friday, Week 3

SLOW DOWN AND PRAY IN QUIET

*"By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and in trust shall be your strength."
(Isaiah 30:15)*

People are troubled when they cannot constantly sense God's nearness so that personal prayer is cushy and undemanding. Instead, God moves through our prayer at a pace other than what we want or expect. When we pray, we cross a threshold into mystery. We enter openly, with an assurance that our life will continually take on the hue of the Holy One. So we need quiet times, spaces in our day or evening when silence and solitude are given prominence in our schedule. Since our culture does not promote this silence but seduces us with constant noise and frenetic, compulsive action, only with steadfast determination will we create



the space we need for daily, formal prayer. When we slow down and allow for quiet spaces, there are fewer barriers between us and the Holy One. In stillness, we come face to face with what we might otherwise miss or avoid. As we give ourselves to periods of silence and solitude, we uncover more of the truth that guides our life and are able to relish the goodness of the Beloved dwelling within the beauty of our soul.

—Joyce Rupp

*How has my quiet prayer time begun to nudge me deeper
into the mystery of God's presence in me and my world?*

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Saturday, Week 3

SHARING GOD'S GOOD NEWS

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence. It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, to walk with him as to walk blindly, to hear his word as not to know it, and to contemplate him, worship him, find our peace in him, as not to. With Jesus life becomes richer and with him it is easier

to find meaning in everything. True missionaries, who never ceases to be disciples, know that Jesus walks with them, speaks to them, breathes with them, works with them. They sense Jesus alive with them in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody.

—*Pope Francis*

How have I been most transformed by my encounter with God in my prayer this Lent?

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4th Sunday of Lent

REJOICE ALWAYS

"Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy." (John 16:20)

Joy is not simply a matter of temperament. It is indeed the fruit of the Holy Spirit and a clear sign of the kingdom within. In the service of God and others, it is always hard to be joyful—all the more reason why we should try to acquire it and make it grow in our hearts. Joy is prayer; joy is strength; joy is love; joy is a net of love by which we catch others. God loves a cheerful giver. She gives most who gives with joy. If in your work you have difficulties and you accept them with joy, with a big smile—in this, like in any other thing—people will see your good works and glorify the Father. The best way to show your gratitude is to accept everything with joy. A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love. Silence gives us a new outlook on life. In it we are filled with the grace of God, which makes us do all things with joy.

—*St. Mother Teresa*

What most helps me to be more joyful and share that joy with others in my daily life?

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Monday, Week 4

DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS

*"Cry out to me whenever you are in trouble; I will deliver you, then you will honor me."
(Psalm 50:15)*

Why, O Lord, is it so hard for me to keep my heart directed toward you? Why do the many little things I want to do, and the many people I know, keep crowding my mind, even during the hours that I am totally free to be

with you and you alone? Why does my mind wander off in so many directions, and why does my heart desire the things that lead me astray? Are you not enough for me? Do I keep doubting your love and care, your mercy and grace? Do I keep wondering, in the center of my being, whether you will give me all I need if I just keep my eyes on you? Please accept my distractions, my fatigue, my irritations, and my faithless wanderings. You know me more deeply and fully than I know myself. You love me with a greater love than I can love myself. You even offer me more than I can desire. Look at me, see me in all my misery and inner confusion, and let me sense your presence in the midst of my turmoil.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How might I dedicate myself even more to God amidst my distractions in prayer?

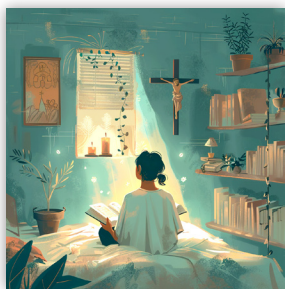
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Tuesday, Week 4

SPENDING TIME WITH THE ONE WE LOVE

"We love because God first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

We can't do prayer alone. We can't coerce and shove our way into a relationship with God. Learning to pray takes a lifetime of openness and hope and it is especially challenging when the last thing we want to do is pray. One of the best ways to make ourselves available to a deepening friendship,



however, is spending time with the other person. Each day prayer requires a genuine openness of mind and heart and a heartfelt intention to be more at home with God. We need to come to a point in our lives when we want to pray so much that we cannot imagine a day in which we do not have a time and a place for God. We need to want to pray enough to set aside a time and place each day to be alone with God, our

Beloved Companion. As in a marriage, if we just breeze by our Companion every day with only a nod or a kiss of hello and good-bye, the relationship can easily slip into artificiality and lack depth because we have not shared anything of our inner self.

—Joyce Rupp

What has been the biggest difference in myself because of my prayer time this Lent?

Wednesday, Week 4

ALWAYS MOVING CLOSER TO CHRIST

"Regard Christ the Lord as holy in your hearts." (1 Peter 3:15)

Jesus teaches that being in relationship with God cannot be a cold attachment to norms and laws, nor the observance of some outward actions that do not lead to a real change of life. Neither can our discipleship simply be motivated by custom just because we have a baptismal certificate. Discipleship must begin with a living experience of God and his love. It is not something static, but a continuous moving forwards towards Christ. It is the experience of the Lord's living, kindly and active presence, an ongoing formation by listening to his word. Prayer takes us to the center of our faith to meet this mysterious other we know as God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. God's presence is the central organizing factor around which everything else in our life must revolve. The more we unite ourselves to Jesus through prayer, Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the Sacraments celebrated and lived in the Church and with one another, the more there will grow in us the joy of cooperating with God in the service of the kingdom of mercy and truth, of justice and peace.



—*Pope Francis*

What do I find most attractive about Jesus when I read and pray the Gospels? Why?

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Thursday, Week 4

YOU BE THE GOOD NEWS

"You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

We believe what Jesus had said: I was hungry—I was naked—I was homeless—I was unwanted, unloved, uncared for—and you did it to me (Mt 25:31-45). We may be doing social work in people's eyes, but we are really contemplatives in the heart of the world. For we are touching the body of Christ 24 hours a day. We have 24 hours in his presence. There is so much suffering, so much hatred, so much misery, and we with our prayer, with our sacrifice can begin at home. Try to bring that presence of God in your family. In our family, we don't need bombs and guns to destroy. To bring peace just get together, love one another, bring that peace, that joy,

that strength of presence of each other in the home. And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world. It is not how much we do, but how much love we put into the action we do. So pray for us that we may be able to be that good news.

—*St. Mother Teresa*

To whom might I be the Good News through my loving actions today?

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Friday, Week 4

FINDING THE GOD OF LOVE

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (John 13:34)

God is Spirit and the Source of all love. Our spiritual journey calls us to seek and find this living God of Love in prayer, worship, spiritual reading, spiritual mentoring, compassionate service to the poor, and good friends. Let us claim the truth that we are loved and open our hearts to receive God's overflowing love poured out for us. And living fully each day let us share that love in all our wonderful and difficult relationships, responsibilities, and passages. The seeds of death are at work in us, but love is stronger than death. Your death and mine is our final passage, our exodus to the full realization of our identity as God's beloved children and to full communion with the God of love. Jesus walked the path ahead of us and invites us to choose the same path during our lifetime. He calls to us, "Follow Me." He assures us, "Do not be afraid." This is our faith.

—*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

When this Lent have I most felt loved by God? How has that changed my behavior?

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Saturday, Week 4

GOD'S HOME IN OUR HEART

"Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7)

Deep within us is a place where we have found God and God has found us. Once in a great while we come to this place within us and we realize it is the goal of our seeking. It is a place of safety and security, an ideal home where we can be ourselves and know that we are accepted for who we are. We may be challenged to grow here, but always in the context of a deep and strong love. Our hearts and minds are easily distracted by many other things, everyday realities such as work, maintaining a physical home, rais-

ing a family, shopping for life's necessities. As much as we yearn to stay closely connected with this inner source we quickly lose our sense of it. Most of the time we search without really being aware of what is gnawing at us deep inside. We search for something called happiness. We long for a gift named peace. We search for meaning in our lives, for love, for understanding of ourselves and others, for an acceptance of the ups and downs of the human condition. Thus, we spend most of our lives seeking what we momentarily find and then lose again.

—Joyce Rupp

How have I most felt at home with God in my prayer time this Lent? With what results?

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5th Sunday of Lent

LISTEN TO HIS VOICE

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father." (John 10:14-15)

Jesus wants to establish with us a relationship that mirrors his relationship with the Father: a relationship of reciprocal belonging in full trust and intimate communion. To express this relationship of friendship, Jesus uses the image of a shepherd with his sheep. He calls them and they recognize his voice, respond to his call and follow him. The mystery of his voice is evocative. From the tone of a voice we perceive love or contempt, affection or coldness. Jesus' voice is unique! If we learn to distinguish it, he guides us on the path of life that goes beyond the abyss of death. If I feel drawn to Jesus, if his voice warms my heart, it is thanks to God the Father who has sown within me the desire for love, for truth, for life, for beauty—and Jesus is all this in fullness! This helps us understand the mystery of vocation. Sometimes Jesus calls us and invites us to follow him, but perhaps we do not realize that it is he who is calling. Have you sometimes heard the Lord's voice in a desire, in a worry, inviting you to follow him more closely?



—Pope Francis

When have I heard the Lord's voice in a desire or a worry, inviting me to follow him more closely?

Monday, Week 5

EMPTYING OURSELVES

“Jesus emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

(Phil 2:7-8)

Christ being rich emptied himself. If I want to be poor like Christ—who became poor even though he was rich—I must do the same. Nowadays people want to be poor and live with the poor, but they want to be free to dispose of things as they wish. To have this freedom is to be rich. They want both but cannot have both. We must strive to acquire the true spirit of poverty which manifests itself in a love for the practice of poverty in imitation of Christ—in imitation of him who chose it as the compassion of his life on earth when he came to live among us. Christ did not have to lead a life of poverty. Thus he taught us how important it is for our sanctification.

—*St. Mother Teresa*

How might I better imitate the poverty of Jesus and empty myself to serve others better?

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Tuesday, Week 5

ENTERING INTO SOLITUDE WITH GOD

“Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry.” (Psalm 88:3)

When we enter into solitude we will often hear two voices—the voice of the world and the voice of the Lord pulling us in two contrary directions. But if we keep returning faithfully to the place of solitude, the voice of the Lord will gradually become stronger and we will come to know and understand with mind and heart the peace we are searching for. What do we do in our solitude? The first answer is nothing. Just be present to the One who wants your attention and listen! It is precisely in this “useless” presence to God that we can gradually die to our illusions of power and control and give ear to the voice of love hidden in the center of our being. But “doing nothing, being useless,” is not as passive as it sounds. In fact it requires effort and great attentiveness. It calls us to an active listening in which we make ourselves available to God’s healing presence and can be made new. The way to develop this attentive listening will vary with different people, but it always includes some type of meditation on scripture.

—*Henri J. M. Nouwen*

How in my prayer have I most experienced being pulled in two directions by the world and by God? How have I responded?

Wednesday, Week 5

WE ARE TRAVELERS OF THE HEART

"Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation" (Psalm 25:5).

What I especially value about the process of spiritual growth is the way the Holy One guides me to explore the inner terrain of my being. Whenever I open the door of my heart and take the passage beyond where I am now, the wonder and richness of divine presence and the resilient beauty of my soul amaze me. As I age, I think I am getting better at deliberately opening the door and leaving the known, safe realms behind. With each threshold crossing, I gain greater freedom to be my most authentic self. Each of us is a traveler of the heart. As we traverse the road of life, we come to unknown and unsought doors revealing further truth about our authentic self. These unfamiliar doors of life hide pieces of beneficial wisdom. They contain information for our transformation even though we may not understand this for quite a while. The experiences of life frequently divert us rather than bring us directly to our inner treasure, causing us to doubt their worth. Each step of the way holds another opportunity for knowing who we are and how we are to live.



—Joyce Rupp

What might I do to open the door of my heart even wider to invite God to transform me even more into the person God wants me to be?

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Thursday, Week 5

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Being holy is not a privilege for the few but a vocation for everyone. Thus we are all called to walk on the path of holiness, which has a name and a face: Jesus Christ, who teaches us to become saints. In the Gospel he shows us the way, the way of the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). In fact, the kingdom of heaven is for those who do not place their security in material things but in love for God, for those who have a simple, humble heart that does not presume to be just and does not judge others, for those who know how to suffer with those who suffer and how to rejoice when others

rejoice. They are not violent but merciful and strive to be instruments for reconciliation and peace. Saints, whether men or women, are instruments for reconciliation and peace. They are always helping people to become reconciled and helping to bring about peace. Thus holiness is beautiful. It is a beautiful path!

—Pope Francis

*Which of the beatitudes describes me and my life today?
Which do I most need to work at to receive God's blessing?*

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Friday, Week 5

CONTINUE JESUS' WORKS OF LOVE

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)

Love Jesus generously, trustfully, without looking back and without fear. Give yourself fully to Jesus—he will use you to accomplish great things if you believe much more in his love than in your weakness. Believe in him, trust in him with blind and absolute confidence because he is Jesus. Believe that Jesus alone is life and that sanctity is nothing but Jesus intimately living in you. Then his hand will be free with you. God's love is so tender, so great, so real, so living that Jesus came just to teach us how to love. Works of love, and declaring love, is the way to peace. And where does this love begin? Right in our hearts. We have been created in order to love and to be loved.

—St. Mother Teresa

How have I most experienced Jesus intimately living in me and changing me?

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Saturday, Week 5

ALL PEOPLE ARE GOD'S FAMILY

"The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it." (Psalm 24:1)

Christians are called to bear witness to the truth that God has gathered all people into one family. Yet wherever we look we see the devastating fear people have of one another. Fear between races, religions, nations, continents. Fear between rich and poor, North and South, East and West. Wherever this fear rules division breeds, leading to hatred, violence, destruction and war. We need new eyes to see and new ears to hear the truth of our unity, a unity which cannot be perceived by our broken, sinful,

anxious hearts. Only a heart filled with perfect love can perceive the unity of humanity. This requires divine perception. God sees his people as one, as belonging to the same family and living in the same house. God wants to share this divine perception with us. By sending the only beloved son to live and die for us all, God wants to open our eyes so that we can see that we belong together in the embrace of God's perfect love.

—Henri J. M. Nouwen

What must I do to break down any "us-them" categories that keep persons separated and deny God's love for everyone?

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Passion/Palm Sunday of Lent

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST'S VULNERABLE LOVE

"Christ indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2 Corinthians 5:15)

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Incarnation is that the Son of God allowed himself to be vulnerable. He came as one of us and he opened himself up in love to the possibility of failure, being wounded, misunderstood, and rejected, all of those things that we know as "daily dyings." Jesus continued to be vulnerable even to death on the cross because he knew that his life was a blessing to others. He grew ever more deeply in love with the Father, drawing strength and trust and courage from that relationship. It was his deep vulnerability that encouraged Jesus to pray: "Let your will be done, not mine" (Lk 22:43) and "Into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46). It was this surrender that led to death and then to the tremendous new growth of resurrection. Being vulnerable does not mean being weak and allowing anyone or anything to hurt us. It is actually a great inner strength which comes from freely choosing to be open to being wounded because we are open to loving in the manner in which Jesus loved.



—Joyce Rupp

What do I most do to cover up my vulnerabilities and close myself off from taking up my cross to follow Jesus?

Monday Holy Week

WHO AM I? WHERE IS MY HEART?

"Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered Jesus, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:67-68)

Holy week begins with the festive procession as people with olive branches welcome Jesus. But the week continues to the mystery of Jesus' death and his resurrection. We might well ask ourselves just one question: Who am I? Who am I, before my Lord? Who am I, before Jesus who enters Jerusalem amid the enthusiasm of the crowd? Am I ready to express my joy to praise him? Or do I stand back? Who am I, before the suffering Jesus? Am I like one of the leaders—priests, Pharisees, teachers of the law—who had decided to kill Jesus? Am I like Judas, who feigns love and then kisses the Master in order to betray him and hand him over?



Or like the disciples who understand nothing, who fell asleep while the Lord was suffering? Or like that disciple who wanted to settle everything with a sword? Am I like those people in power who hastily summon a tribunal and seek false witnesses? Where is my heart? Which of these persons am I like? May this question remain with us throughout the entire week.

—Pope Francis

How might I take some time to discover in what ways I resemble somehow each of the characters in Jesus' passion story?

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Tuesday Holy Week

JESUS IS THIRSTING FOR OUR RESPONSE

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." (Jn 15:16)

Today God continues to call—you and me—but do we listen? Have we heard his voice in the silence of our hearts? Do we make time to “be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:11)? For God cannot be heard in the midst of noise and the clamors of the world. Do we make time for prayer in our day? Do we love Jesus enough to want to listen to his call to let go of everything and follow him in the freedom of poverty, with undivided love in chastity, through total surrender in obedience? From the cross, Jesus cries out, “I thirst” (Jn 19:28). His thirst was for souls—even as he hung

there—dying, alone, despised. Who will bring those souls to him to satiate that thirst of the infinite God dying of love? Can you and I continue to stand by, a mere spectator? Or pass by and do nothing?

—*St. Mother Teresa*

How might I more fully respond to Jesus' thirst to bring others to know and follow him?

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Wednesday Holy Week

THE WAY TO NEW LIFE

"The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:10-11)

Suffering and death belong to the narrow road of Jesus. Jesus does not glorify them, or call them beautiful, good, or something to be desired. Jesus does not call for heroism or suicidal self-sacrifice. No, Jesus invites us to look at the reality of our existence and reveals this harsh reality as the way to new life. The core message of Jesus is that real joy and peace can never be reached while bypassing suffering and death, but only by going right through them. We could say: We really have no choice. Indeed, who escapes suffering and death? Yet there is still a choice. We can deny the reality of life, or we can face it. When we face it not in despair, but with the eyes of Jesus, we discover that where we least expect it, something is hidden that holds a promise stronger than death itself. Jesus lived his life with the trust that God's love is stronger than death and that death therefore does not have the last word. He invites us to face the painful reality of our existence with the same trust. This is what Lent is all about.



—*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

How might I join my suffering and daily "little deaths" to that of Jesus and imitate his faithfulness to God despite these challenges?

Holy Thursday

WE TOO ARE PASSOVER PILGRIMS

"This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD." (Exodus 12:11)

The Passover celebration commemorated the Jewish deliverance from slavery. The blood of the slain lamb marked the doorposts of the households to be passed over by the angel of death. This event reminded the people that God was with them and would never leave them. In the first Passover the people are described as true pilgrims, standing as they ate, ready to leave instantly. On Holy Thursday, Jesus celebrates a new Passover and gives the Bread of Life as nourishment for our journey to spiritual freedom. This celebration is an invitation to remember that we are pilgrims on a spiritual journey in which God travels with us. Today let us remember that God is always ready to nourish us on this journey to our true



homeland. We are only passing through this time and place. While our life here is valuable and essential to our spiritual growth, we cannot get so rooted and attached to earthly values that we refuse to hear the call of God to move on to deeper growth. Today, let us partake of the Eucharist “like those who are in flight,” ready to go and eager to grow.

—Joyce Rupp

How have I most experienced God's nourishing me on my spiritual journey with God this Lent?

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Good Friday

REACHING OUT TO HELP OTHERS

"Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27)

The cross of Christ invites us to allow ourselves to be smitten by his love, teaching us always to look upon others with mercy and tenderness, especially those who suffer, who need help, who need a word or a concrete action. The cross invites us to step outside ourselves to meet them and extend a hand to them. How many times have we seen people like them on the Way of the Cross: Pilate, Simon of Cyrene, Mary, the women. Today I ask you: which of them do you want to be? Do you want to be like Pilate, who did not have the courage to go against the tide to save Jesus' life, and instead washed his hands? Are you one of those who wash their hands, who feign

ignorance and look the other way? Or are you like Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus to carry that heavy wood, or like Mary and the other women, who were not afraid to accompany Jesus all the way to the end, with love and tenderness? Jesus is looking at you now and is asking you: do you want to help me carry the cross?

—Pope Francis

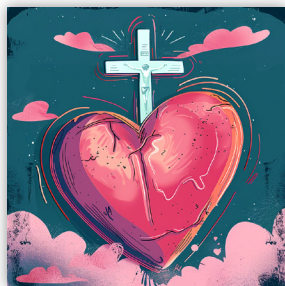
What cross do I most need to carry with Jesus' help today?

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Holy Saturday

JESUS, I AM HERE, LOVE ME

"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." (John 15:9)

In the Gospel there are those few little words to describe his passion and death: he was crowned, scourged, spat upon—those few little words which by now we could have easily forgotten. The Gospels are very short in their explanation of the passion. They avoid great description. But Jesus has died on the cross because he loved. Jesus understood our human nature. He understood that far from the eyes is far from the heart also. Just imagine what our lives would be without him. Today let us not read much, or meditate much even, but just allow Jesus to love us. We always want to say, "Jesus, I love you," but we don't allow Jesus to love us. Today say often, "Jesus I am here, love me." When we look at the cross we know how much he loved us; when we look at the tabernacle, we know how much he loves us now. "Loved," past tense; "Loves," present tense. Not only past tense, but he loves us now. He loves me tenderly.



—St. Mother Teresa

How might I take time today just to experience more fully Jesus' personal love for me?

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Easter Vigil

HE IS RISEN & WITH US STILL

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." (Luke 24:5)

The Easter season is a time of hope. There still is fear, there still is a painful awareness of sinfulness, but there also is light breaking through. Something new is happening, something that goes beyond the changing moods of our

life. We can be joyful or sad, optimistic or pessimistic, tranquil or angry, but the solid stream of God's presence moves deeper than the small waves of our minds and hearts. Easter brings the awareness that God is present even when his presence is not directly noticed. Easter brings the good news that, although things seem to get worse in the world, the Evil One has already been overcome. Easter allows us to affirm that although God seems very distant and although we remain preoccupied with many little things, our Lord walks with us on the road and keeps explaining the Scriptures to us. Thus there are many rays of hope casting their light on our way through life.

—*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

What about Christ's resurrection give me the most hope? Why?

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Easter Sunday

NO MORE LAME EXCUSES!

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb." (John 20:1)

Imagine how early Mary had to get up to get to the tomb. Think of the courage it took to go in the predawn darkness. No street lights to guide her footsteps, no way to see any lurking dangers. It was probably no safer then than it is now for women to be walking alone in the dark. She was in a graveyard, not the most comfy place to be strolling. What love and dedication this woman had. How much she must have loved Jesus to risk doing what she did. As I celebrate Easter this year, I look at all my lame excuses for not being more dedicated and loving in my relationships and in my work. I sometimes find myself whining about the littlest things like getting up early to pray, answering another phone call, packing my suitcase for the umpteenth time, etc. I forget that there is a price to be paid if one is to be a disciple of the Risen Christ. If I truly have the joy and fire of Easter in my spiritual bones, I will be willing to do such things as make an extra effort to have quality prayer, graciously do what is needed as part of my ministry, and give of my precious time for the sake of loving another.

—*Joyce Rupp*

In what ways will I now be more dedicated to following Jesus after my Lenten experiences?



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Pope Francis's reflections are adapted from his encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, weekly papal audiences, addresses, messages, homilies and books.

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A LENTEN PILGRIM'S DAILY PRAYER

Companionship God, create in me
the heart of a pilgrim.
Grant me peace of mind and heart
as I reflect on the past to see
the ways you have been with me.
May I look with a clear, inner eye
and become aware of how you have both
comforted and challenged me on my journey.
I want to celebrate your companionship
through the numerous twists and turns
that have been mine.
Speak to the pilgrim part of my heart.
Encourage me to find the many,
many aspects of my life
that call me to gratitude and wonder.
Remind me often that I am, indeed,
a pilgrim on the way home to you.
I need not be afraid of the wilderness
and the moments of feeling lost,
for you are always there
as a loving Guide and Companion.

—*Joyce Rupp*

