



LENT



GOOD SHEPHERD
NEW YORK

LENT

2022 DEVOTIONAL

But mostly we're forgetting we're dead stars too, my mouth is full
of dust and I wish to reclaim the rising—

to lean in the spotlight of streetlight with you, toward
what's larger within us, toward how we were born.

— *Ada Limón*, “Dead Stars”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NYC and beyond for contributing to this guide.

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WELCOME

Welcome to the season of Lent—forty days between Epiphany and Good Friday. Inaugurated by ashes to the forehead (Ash Wednesday), and culminating in the Easter celebration, Lent is the reminder that we all come from dust and to dust we shall return (Genesis 3:19).

Commemorating Christ's forty days of fasting in the wilderness, Lent simultaneously draws us into his suffering, while also pointing us toward the hope of his resurrection. Lent literally means "spring." It is a season of death and rebirth, a time to take a spiritual inventory and clean out that which hinders our relationship with Christ and our service to him.

In this devotional, you will encounter the traditional themes of Lent: grief, repentance, death, and hope, resurrection, and rebirth, woven in with the themes of neighbor-love, ecology and sustainability. Each day is designed to draw you into these themes, and to engage you through a number of spiritual disciplines (scripture reading, prayer, remembering, thanksgiving, listening, stillness, etc).

Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays will include a scripture, reflection, invitation and prayer/benediction.

Wednesdays will feature the practice of Lectio Divina.

Fridays will feature a listening or visual meditation.

Saturdays will feature the practice of Thanksgiving.

Sundays, we rest. Together.

May this devotional, and the content within it, bring you to a deeper union with Christ as we follow him together.

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is Latin for Divine Reading. Lectio is an ancient practice that has been a long standing part of the Christian tradition. It is a meditative way of reading scripture* that focuses on allowing God to speak through people's imaginations and prayers.

| Silence The general practice begins with a time of silence meant to allow everyone present to center themselves and prepare to receive divine insight.

| Reading Aloud This silence is followed by a slow and intentional reading of a passage of Scripture. Depending on the length of the text the reader(s) will read the passage 2-3 times.

| Meditation The Christian tradition teaches that the Holy Spirit dwells within us in a dynamic, active way. This means that under the right circumstances we can trust the Spirit to guide our thoughts. During this time of meditation the listeners allow themselves to focus on any part of the passage that is meaningful to them and follow their imaginations where they will go prompted by the text.

| Sharing After some time the people may share any images or words that they feel like God has illuminated for them.

*This guide will include the practice of Lectio Divina with Gospel readings and poetry.

THANKSGIVING

We believe that God acts in and through our lives in more ways than we could ever know; it is only natural that we give thanks for this. The outline for the practice of thanksgiving (featured on Saturdays) is below.

| Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

| Remembering

- Remembering that _____ is a gift from the Lord, review your week...
- In silent or audible prayer, give thanks...

| Call and Response

Thanks be to God!
It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice. (If you are not physically present with someone for this practice, try a voice memo!)

ASH WEDNESDAY

March 2

...for dust you are and to dust you will return.

— *Genesis 3:19*

| Reflection

Today we are reminded that we are dust, in an example of our mortality and of our need for repentance, which is turning from the ways that lead to destruction and dehumanization. The ashes—often from last year's Palm Sunday branches—are a sign of physical death and mourning. By receiving these ashes, we publicly proclaim our intent to die to worldly distractions. The ashen marks left behind are an outward sign of an inward posture of turning and repentance.

| Invitation

Take a few moments to consider how God is calling you to repent during this Lenten season.

| Prayer

Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done, and by what I have left undone. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved my neighbor as myself. I am truly sorry and I humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and forgive me; that I may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

— *BCP*

THURSDAY

March 3

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters
God called Seas: and God saw that it was good.

— *Genesis 1:10*

| Reflection

Oh, how deeply sorry I am.
For our selfishness scars
And mars your beauty
Take up the spade
And dig our own grave
The fiery embers
A death insurance
Our return to ash
Secured with a vengeance.
I lower my eyes.
Tonight the wine
Is bitter.

| Invitation

It is profoundly sobering to consider the scars and wounds we inflict upon this planet. Take some time to sit with the tension of this. Pray for people everywhere to move toward repairing and restoring our relationship with God's creation. In your church, in your community, can you imagine what that might look like?

| Prayer

God our source, help us to face the harm that has been done to your creation. Lead us to pursue a relationship of mutual flourishing between humanity and the created world. The state of our world, especially our future, can feel so dire; Spirit, be our hope.

FRIDAY
March 4

“O mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established equity;
you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.”
Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God
and fall down before his footstool;
he is the Holy One.

— *Psalm 99:4-5*

| Listening Meditation

“Lily’s Dream” by *The Brilliance*

SATURDAY

March 5

Remembrance + Thanksgiving

3 min | Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

3 min | Remembering

- Remembering that our HABITATIONS are a gift from the Lord, review your week and think of a physical location you are thankful for.
- In silent or audible prayer, give thanks for this space, for its beauty and hospitality. Think of an action of care you can take to contribute to its flourishing.

< 1 min | Call and Response

Thanks be to God!

It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice. (If you are not physically present with someone for this practice, try a voice memo!)

SUNDAY

March 6

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

— *Matthew 11:28*

| Invitation

On this feast day, take time to rest and to connect with your spiritual community.

Grace and Peace!

MONDAY

March 7

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

— *Romans 12:18*

| Reflection

“Fellowship is a kind of belonging that isn’t based on status, achievement, or gender, but instead is based on a deep belief that everyone matters, everyone is welcome, and everyone is loved, no conditions, no exceptions.”

— Brian McLaren

| Invitation

Recall a moment from yesterday. If you were in the company of others, remember someone you interacted with or noticed. In what way did you extend or withhold hospitality? Or charity? Imagine another encounter of a similar kind in the future. What choice could you make toward helping another human experience grace and peace in your presence?

| Prayer

God of welcome, form us into a deeply rooted and profoundly hospitable people. May those who encounter us, by your Spirit, become more integrated into wholeness.

TUESDAY March 8

I am one of God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved.

— *Colossians 3:12*

| Reflection

Chosen. It's the desire that surfaces at all stages of life. From youngsters picking teammates for their afternoon sports or as lovers swipe their way to a match. We all long to be chosen. We long for someone to see us—truly see us. And the beauty we uncover in God's story is that from beginning to end it has always been about God inviting, choosing, and holding creation within a loving gaze.

Holy. It's an undercurrent that longs to see justice roll down like a river. It's the desire within us to live in wholeness. And the greatest part of the holiness that God offers is that it is not something for which we work, but rather an attribute we claim.

Beloved. It's an identity that we are created for and yet one that we often fail to claim. We are too often captivated by our own fear and shame, but this word holds the power to obliterate all obstructions. God's love is fierce and full; tender and tenacious; wild and free.

| Invitation

Close your eyes and consider how you see yourself. What are the words that come to mind to describe your self-perception? How might you claim your chosenness, holiness, and belovedness?

| Benediction

May the God who lavishes love remind you of your belonging.

WEDNESDAY

March 9

Lectio Divina

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

| **Silence**

| **Reading Aloud**

| **Meditation**

| **Sharing**

THURSDAY

March 10

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

— Psalm 42:2-3

| Reflection

“I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every living spark and I have breathed out nothing that can die...I flame above the beauty of the fields; I shine in the waters; in the sun, the moon and the stars, I burn. And by means of the airy wind, I stir everything into quickness with a certain invisible life which sustains all...I, the fiery power, lie bidden in these things and they blaze from me.”

— Hildegard of Bingen

| Invitation and Prayer

Today, find a few moments outside to be present. Find a tree, a flower, an ant, a cloud; be fully present to its beauty and say a simple breath prayer.

Inhale: Creator God;

Exhale: Thank You.

FRIDAY
March 11

Triptych Art



Image Credit: Karen Gutowsky-Zimmerman, *In You I See*, 2022, photograph, Washington Coast.

Image Inspiration: “My hope was to create a meditative image that was low value when tight and close up, and full value when vast and distant. Equalizing intimate/local and broad/global. These are the rhythms of my prayers when I see God in the micro and macrocosms of our world.”

— Karen Gutowsky-Zimmerman

SATURDAY

March 12

Remembrance + Thanksgiving

3 min | Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

3 min | Remembering

- Remembering that our RELATIONSHIPS are a gift from the Lord, review your week and think of one person who you are thankful for.
- In silent or audible prayer, give thanks for this person. You can also message this person to let them know they came to mind and that you are grateful for their way of being in the world.

< 1 min | Call and Response

Thanks be to God!

It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice. (Again, if you are not physically present with someone for this practice, try a voice memo!)

SUNDAY

March 13

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

— *Matthew 11:28*

| Invitation

On this feast day, take time to rest and to connect with your spiritual community.

Grace and Peace!

MONDAY

March 14

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

— Matthew 6:21

| Reflection

Sin gets in the way of loving others. Brian Zahnd says that “Sin is better understood as a sickness of the soul than as a forensic legal problem. We need a healer more than we need a lawyer.” Through this restoration, we are led to an abundance of love; love shaped by a pursuit of mutual flourishing, encompassing all of creation.

| Invitation

Examine what is taking priority in your heart. In what ways might this priority be expanded or reshaped to contribute to a flourishing beyond your usual sphere?

| Prayer

○ God who is love, let love empower our compassion. Let love embrace each and every one. Let love unite humans and non-human in restorative co-existence. ○ Jesus, love come down to earth, may we honor the earth. May we honor all that dwells in the earth. May we be reconciled with the earth, become what we are, of the earth. ○ Spirit of love, grant us a spirit of humility. Grant us a spirit of carefulness. Grant us a spirit of friendship, for the earth and all that dwells with us here.

TUESDAY

March 15

And he said to them, 'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

— Luke 12:15

| Reflection

This is a great happiness.
The air is silk.
There is milk in the looks

That come from strangers.
The wind like kisses,
The music in the soup,
The group of trees,
Laughing as I say their names.

It is all hosannah.
It is all prayer.
Jerusalem is walking in this world.

— Julia Cameron

| Invitation

Christ reminds us that what we have, the things we can buy and possess, will not a good life make. In tandem with this truth, we must also accept the reality that consumerism and its insatiable need for more doesn't just beget greed in our souls-- it brings turmoil to this beautiful planet that we've inherited, and to those who are living on it. How can you resist the pull of greed and status? How can you appreciate the world around you today? How can you simplify your desires and actively choose contentment today?

| Prayer

Loving and wise Creator: you brought life to this planet with the intention of sharing with us its oddities, resources, and beauty. You blessed us with this world, and with each other, in hopes that we could care for it and for one another. Help us to be responsible and true to our conviction of tending your creation. Lead us away from always wanting; we repent for our grasping and avarice. Lead us beside still waters, where we can rest in a steady delight of the world around us, of what we already have. Teach us to be thankful for this earth and to protect it with our actions. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

March 16

Lectio Divina

Gospel: Luke 13:31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

| **Silence**

| **Reading Aloud**

| **Meditation**

| **Sharing**

THURSDAY

March 17

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
let the field be joyful and all that is therein.
Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy
before the Lord.

— *Psalm 96:11-12*

| Reflection

When St. Patrick was isolated in the wilderness herding cattle, he connected with what theologians call the “natural revelation” of God. He sensed with the winds, the seasons, the creatures, and the nights under the stars, the presence of God.

J. Phillip Newell writes, “In Celtic Spirituality, there is a practice of listening for the living Word of God in nature as well as in scripture. This was the conviction of the ninth century philosopher John Scotus Eriugena...Eriugena taught that Christ moves among us in two shoes, as it were, one shoe being that of creation, the other that of scripture, and stressed the need to be as alert and attentive to Christ moving among us in creation as we are to the voice of Christ in scripture.”

| Invitation

Reflect on how God is inviting you to see creation and how you are responding using this excerpt from the Ecological Examen.

Where did I feel God’s presence in creation today?
Where do I see the beauty of creation and hear the cries of the earth?
What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?
How can I show my love for God through my respect for creation and my neighbor?
Where have I fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters?
How can I repair my relationship with creation and make choices consistent with my desire for reconciliation with creation?

| Prayer

Inhale: Divine Mystery
Exhale: Reveal Yourself in creation

FRIDAY
March 18

What if I had not believed
that I should see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living!
O tarry and await the Lord's pleasure;
be strong, and he shall comfort your heart;
wait patiently for the Lord.

— *Psalm 27:17-18*

| Listening Meditation

"Etude" by *Julian Lage*

SATURDAY

March 19

Remembrance + Thanksgiving

3 min | Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

3 min | Remembering

- Remembering that our PLAY is a gift from the Lord, review your week and think of enjoyable time you spent that didn't involve a life advancement strategy.
- In silent or audible prayer, give thanks for this time. If you weren't able to identify a time of play, pray for creativity around what play could look like for you this week.

< 1 min | Call and Response

Thanks be to God!

It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice.

SUNDAY
March 20

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

— *Matthew 11:28*

| Invitation

On this feast day, take time to rest and to connect with your spiritual community.

Grace and Peace!

MONDAY

March 21

I sought the Lord, and he answered me
and delivered me out of all my terror.
Look upon him and be radiant,
and let not your faces be ashamed.

— *Psalm 34:4–5*

| Reflection

This Psalm follows an acrostic pattern, a style David favored throughout his work. But Psalm 34 is imperfect, according to a classical acrostic. There are verses missing, letters that simply don't exist. But that's what makes it a perfect psalm. Annie Dillard wrote, "Theirs is the mystery of continuous creation and all that providence implies: the uncertainty of vision, the horror of the fixed, the dissolution of the present, the intricacy of beauty, the pressure of fecundity, the elusiveness of the free, and the flawed nature of perfection," in her book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. It seems David was in on this, and is inviting us to be in on this, as we participate in the "continuous creation" of The Liturgical Calendar. When we turn toward God, our attempts at art and at awe should be without shame. God is delighted in the turning, not the acrostic pattern.

| Invitation

Try connecting to prayer in a way that feels new and unnerving. If you lean toward silence meditation, take a pen to paper. Writers, here's your invitation to sit in stillness. If your prayers have become prescriptive, pray with a child. Take a walk. Let each inhale and exhale mark a stanza in your movement toward God.

| Benediction

May you feel the radiance of God louder than your fears and softer than your insecurities as it envelopes you. May you make a home in that warmth.

TUESDAY

March 22

He put forth then another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in it's branches.

— *Matthew 13:31-32*

| Reflection

The emptiness / that you have been holding / for such a long season now; / that ache in your chest that goes with you / night and day / in your sleeping, / your rising— / think of this / not as a mere hollow, / the void left from / the life that has leached out / of you. / Think of it like this: / as the space being prepared / for the seed. / Think of it / as your earth that dreams / of the branches / the seed contains. / Think of it / as your heart making ready / to welcome the nest / its branches will hold.

— *Jan Richardson, "Blessing that Holds a Nest in Its Branches"*

| Invitation

Though a seed starts off small, it no doubt holds possibility, bringing growth, change, and new creation. During this season of lent, can you offer up a space for a tiny seed to be planted in your heart? Can you dare to dream of what that seed contains?

| Prayer

God of the mustard seed, help us to trust in the growth that often comes through the small and slow.

WEDNESDAY

March 23

| **Lectio Divina with Poetry**

Not just people, but balled-up honeybees.
Polar bears clawing for crumbling floes.
The wind mourns as it strips the soil
from its own beloved hillside.
Fault lines pitch trees and stones
with the lurching sobs of the grieved.

It's hard to imagine what start, what sequoia
needs to await a blessed day of peace.
But even they must feel the gravitational pull
of dead leaves and beetle legs washing down
with the rain water, the vanishing bromeliads
holding out their cups.

— *Tania Runyan, "All Creation Groans"*

| **Silence**

| **Reading Aloud**

| **Meditation**

| **Sharing**

THURSDAY

March 24

Love the Lord, all you who worship him;
the Lord protects the faithful,
but repays to the full those who act haughtily.
Be strong and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord.

— *Psalm 31:23-24*

| Reflection

In our small “busito” (van), we drove northwest from Guatemala City through a varied and often spectacular countryside of volcanoes, coffee fields, and villages. Although much of what we traversed was technically rainforest, due to a harvest-destroying, historic drought, it was now part of the “Dry Corridor,” a swath of Central America that has punished subsistence farmers, contributed to a growing famine in the region, and propelled migrants north. The drought was compounding centuries of exploitative “extractivismo,” the locals told us—colonial and neo-colonial policies that had rendered the deceptively lush country’s economy overly dependent on just a few export crops. As we approached Guatemala’s border with Mexico, large buses idled on the Guatemala side of the border, at the ready to return migrants who had been intercepted by the United States and Mexico to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. The term “climate refugees” didn’t exist some 70 years ago when western superpowers penned the international treaties that form the basis of modern asylum law. Nor did modern neoliberal world commerce, which effectively commodifies people as units of labor, subject to the vicissitudes of supply and demand.

| Invitation

What action might you take to help to reverse the dehumanizing commodification of God’s creatures, in a way that answers Christ’s call to radical inclusivity for our fellow human beings?

| Prayer

O Come, divine parent; help us put an end to the scandal of our planet’s long history of subjugation of people to the claims of commerce.

FRIDAY

March 25

In sacrifice and offering you take no pleasure
(you have given me ears to hear you);
Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required,
and so I said, "Behold, I come.
In the roll of the book it is written concerning me:
'I love to do your will, O my God;
your law is deep in my heart.'"

— *Psalm 40:7-9*

| Listening Meditation

"Mi" by Nils Frahm

SATURDAY

March 26

Remembrance + Thanksgiving

3 min | Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

3 min | Remembering

- Remembering that our FOOD is a gift from the Lord, review your week and think of something you ate or drank that nourished you.
- In silent or audible prayer, give thanks for this meal. If you shared this meal with someone, give thanks for this person.

< 1 min | Call and Response

Thanks be to God!

It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice.

SUNDAY
March 27

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

— *Matthew 11:28*

| Invitation

On this feast day, take time to rest and to connect with your spiritual community.

Grace and Peace!

MONDAY

March 28

Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

— *John 14:12-14*

| Reflection

It's difficult to comprehend what it must have been like to hear these words from Jesus. The idea of doing "greater works than these," must have seemed laughable to those who heard it, and yet in saying it, Jesus was giving his followers, and all of us who believe, the peace of knowing we're capable of doing more than we can imagine. Jesus' life was confined to a very small geographic area, yet He knew in going to the Father, the Spirit would come and empower his followers to do greater work in the world as they carried the message with them wherever they went.

| Invitation

Look at your work today, whatever your vocation may be, as an extension of how God is at work in our world today. No matter what challenges you may face, trust that God can and will do the impossible.

| Prayer

Loving God, in Jesus' name, we pray that you will embolden us to be a light to the people and places you send us today. Remind us our work is your work in us. By your Spirit, give us the confidence to trust that with you, all things are possible.

TUESDAY

March 29

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

— Mark 1.12

| Reflection

Jesus's baptism is a moment of divine welcome, when the Spirit descends upon him like a dove and the voice from heaven declares him a Beloved Son. Immediately afterward, that same Spirit thrusts Jesus into the wilderness. Ecstatic consolation followed by baffling desolation. In the wilderness, all of the affirmations that come to him at his baptism are absent. Now he faces confusion and temptation. The only voice he hears questions his identity as the Beloved Son.

| Invitation

Henri Nouwen writes, "There is no journey to God outside the journey Jesus made." This means for us, welcome as God's beloved. It also means wilderness. How we want to avoid desolate places. When we are in the wilderness, how quickly we want to return to civilization.

In this season, may we open ourselves to the possibility that the wilderness — the place where our former certainties about ourselves, communities and even God can no longer bring confidence or comfort — is where the Spirit is taking us. How can we patiently wait for what God might have?

| Prayer

God of the wilderness, see me in my wanderings. May my confused groans be a prayer to you. Open me to the new life that emerges from the desolation.

WEDNESDAY
MARCH 30

| Lectio Divina with Poetry

We were made to understand it would be
Terrible. Every small want, every niggling urge,
Every hate swollen to a kind of epic wind.

Livid, the land, and ravaged, like a rageful
Dream. The worst in us having taken over
And broken the rest utterly down.

A long age
Passed. When at last we knew how little
Would survive us—how little we had mended

Or built that was not now lost—something
Large and old awoke. And then our singing
Brought on a different manner of weather.

Then animals long believed gone crept down
From trees. We took new stock of one another.
We wept to be reminded of such color.

— Tracy K. Smith, “An Old Story”

| Silence

| Reading Aloud

| Meditation

| Sharing

THURSDAY

March 31

He that dwells in the shelter of the Most High shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty...He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings will you find refuge.

— *Psalms 91:1, 4*

| Reflection

I will raise that which you have laid down
Out of fire will I forge your crown
To death you put the passion and the will
As I whisper my child Abide
Peace be still

But in this desert silence
And Dark Night of the Soul
I am rooting you deeper
I am making you whole

Now lay down your burdens
Let me renew your mind
Come drink of my fountain
Perfect rest may you find

| Invitation

Where have you found God in Silence in this season? In periods of darkness or despair or uncertainty, how have you grown? How has the season changed or formed you? How have you seen or experienced God differently? Have you been asked to lay something down, let something go, or release?

| Prayer

Lord, as we continue in this season of darkness, let us take down our facades, lay down our burdens and find your embrace in the mystery of stillness.

FRIDAY
April 1

Triptych Art



Image Credit: Jackie Anderson, *Wander, Wonder, Worship*, 2022, photograph, Petaluma, CA.

Image Inspiration: “Glory to The Divine, who created space and time for humans to walk among and with creation, full of wonder. And to Jesus, walking on creation, with creation, using creation to portray grace, growth, healing, hope, and Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.”

— Jackie Anderson

SATURDAY

April 2

Remembrance + Thanksgiving

3 min | Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

3 min | Remembering

- Remembering that our WORK is a gift from the Lord, review your week and identify a part of your vocation you are thankful for.
- In silent or audible prayer, give thanks. Take a breath and imagine the possibilities that can unfold in fruitfulness and wonder.

< 1 min | Call and Response

Thanks be to God!

It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice.

SUNDAY

April 3

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavily burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation]

— *Matthew 11:28*

| Invitation

On this feast day, take time to rest and to connect with your spiritual community.

Grace and Peace!

MONDAY

April 4

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies,
do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you,
pray for those who abuse you.

— Luke 6:27-28

| Reflection

“Over the centuries men have argued that the actual practice of this command just isn’t possible...[Nietzsche argued] that the Christian ethic is for weak men, not for strong men, and certainly not for the superman. And that it was just additional proof that Jesus was an impractical idealist who never quite came down to earth. But we have come to see today that, far from being the practical, the impractical idealist, Jesus is the practical realist, and the words of this text stand before us with new urgency. And far from being the pious injunction of a utopian dreamer, this command is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. Yes, love is the key to the solution of the problems of our world, love even for enemies.”

— Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Loving Your Enemies”

| Invitation

On this day, we remember the death and life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who was assassinated April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King made it a practice to preach on today’s scripture at least once a year and call us back to the heart of Jesus’ radical, redemptive, love which transforms the world, one enemy at a time. In this sermon, Dr. King goes on to give some practical steps as to how to put this difficult command into practice:

1. You must begin by analyzing self.
2. Discover the element of good in your enemy.
3. When the opportunity presents itself for you to defeat your enemy, that is the time you must not do it—you must seek only to defeat evil systems, no person who bears the image of God.

| Prayer

God of radical, enemy-transforming, creative love, would you open my eyes to see the good in my enemy, and may this small act of love transform and redeem this dark world.

TUESDAY

April 5

I still my soul and make it quiet, like a child upon its mother's breast;
my soul is quieted within me.

— *Psalms 131:3*

| Reflection

open your mouth and i'll fill it.
come to the door and i'll open it.
put out your palm and i'll give you
a marble, cat's eye, streaked with
red and with blue. shiver your
shoulders and i'll wrap you
up. come to the piano and i'll
play you a song. tell me a joke
and i'll laugh. we'll go for a walk
on the path round the pond
when you come home restless,
late afternoon. we'll count the
geese as they fly by. bring me some
flowers and they'll go in a vase.

a carton of eggs and i'll fry
them. for your empty cup,
i'll pour you some milk. for your
plastic spoon some cold
ice cream. ask for a story and
i'll find one to tell. come to the
door and i'll open it. open your
mouth and i'll fill it.

what i won't do is send you
off empty. what i won't do is
keep the door locked. when you're
far from home i sit and i wait.
expect to be filled with me.

— Amy Bornman, "Mother God"
from *There is a Future: A Year of Daily Midrash*

| Invitation

What in your soul longs to be stilled? Is there an encounter from the poem that resonates with you, or is there a different encounter/image arising in your mind? Imagine how this experience might bring a deeper understanding of rest with God and connection with your communities.

| Prayer

Tender Parent, thank you for how your presence unfolds in the everyday rhythms of life. Help me notice you; still my soul beside you as I move through this world.

WEDNESDAY

April 6

Lectio Divina

Gospel: John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

| **Silence**

| **Reading Aloud**

| **Meditation**

| **Sharing**

THURSDAY

April 7

I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

— *Jeremiah 31:13b*

| Reflection

And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on the earth.

— *Raymond Carver, "Late Fragment"*

| Invitation

If you are able, lie on the ground for 3 minutes and feel what it's like to physically encounter the earth in this posture. If this posture isn't available to you, try touching with both hands a tree, or other living thing.

| Prayer

Beloved Creator, remind us of our connection to the earth and through it, to your everlasting presence. May we surrender our sorrow and consider the possibility of joy expressed through every living thing around us.

FRIDAY
April 8

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.
Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses of the Negev.
Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

— Psalm 126

| Listening Meditation

String Quintet in C Major, Op. 30, No. 6, G.324 by Luigi Boccherini

SATURDAY

April 9

Remembrance + Thanksgiving

3 min | Creating Space

- Find a comfortable position and sit in stillness and, if possible, quiet.
- Be reminded that God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit, who searches our hearts, to guide you in this space.

3 min | Remembering

Remembering that our REST is a gift from the Lord,
give thanks for these minutes and continue to spend time in stillness.

< 1 min | Call and Response

Thanks be to God!
It is right to give thanks and praise!

Speak the first part of this refrain to someone in your spiritual community. The other person can respond with the second part. This call and response develops a corporate sense of hope and follows the scriptural guidance to rejoice with those who rejoice.

PALM SUNDAY

April 10

So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

— John 12:19

| Reflection

The Pharisees were spiritual religious leaders and experts in the law. In contrast to the Sadducees, who were mostly aristocratic, the Pharisees were connected to and held influence with the common people.

Perhaps this was fuel for Jesus’ criticism when he addressed the masses and the disciples concerning them. “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others.”

The Pharisees had access to, but were not servants of their neighbors. Instead they “shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces.” In their quest to maintain popularity and significance, the Pharisees were caught up in craft and scheme to challenge, trap and discredit Jesus. And when the people started going after Jesus, it was a direct threat to a power they needed to prop up their lives.

| Invitation

Can you remember a time when you were dismayed at the realization that your plans (for your ego) were getting you nowhere? In a quest for significance and power, have you ever adopted a pharisaical posture at the expense of your neighbor?

| Prayer

God who has mercy on the dismayed, forgive us for confusing empire with salvation. Help us, by your spirit to go after Jesus and neighbor, in love.

MONDAY

April 11

He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

— *Isaiah 42:2-3*

| Reflection

On this Monday of Holy Week, we are reminded of the radical way of Jesus foretold in the Old Testament. Jesus modeled a way of being - humility rather than boastfulness, compassion rather than judgment, meekness rather than attention. The son of God lived in all of our humanity, our anger and impatience, uncertainty and pride. Yet, in the life and ministry of Jesus, we see a way of both gentleness and justice. A heart that bends toward the most marginalized in society, raising them to the table, never “breaking” or “quenching”. A heart that burns for justice.

| Invitation

Look to the week ahead knowing that Easter is coming and invite gratitude for the new ways of being shown to us in Jesus’ life. Now think to the past - recall a moment of withholding gentleness. Recall a moment when you were not a voice of justice. Knowing God’s kindness and mercy for you, imagine how your words and actions in the future may best embody a new way.

| Prayer

Loving Creator, we pray that we may exist in our neighborhoods, cities, and world with compassion for the hurting. Grant that we have the courage to call out instances and systems of oppression, pursuing justice for your beloved. Grant that we may have the humility to repent for the ways we have fallen short. May we remember the example given to us by your son with thanksgiving and joy as we make your Kingdom known here and now.

TUESDAY

April 12

Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

— John 12:24-25

| Reflection

At this point during Holy Week, Jesus knows he is going to die. In these verses from the book of John, Jesus is teaching his followers while also carrying this unimaginably heavy knowledge. Jesus uses an analogy that would have been very familiar to his audience: a grain of wheat requires something in order to grow. If every necessary element is present (sunshine, water, soil, seed), it will keep producing fruit, sustaining and expanding life. Dr. Michael Battle once said, “God is seen in nature, showing us what God looks like.” One of the ways in which we see God through nature is interdependence. This is the idea that multiple parties depend on one another to live, to grow, to flourish. As mosses, trees, and the unending wonders of creation are interdependent, so too is God—“God is a mystery so interdependent that the interdependence becomes the unifying substance” (Dr. Battle). How easy it is for us to hold, with an iron grip, onto our ideas about life and what it should be. How terribly hard it can be to loosen our clenching fists and extend an open hand to what will free us, to acknowledge our own interdependence and to let it become that substance that binds us together, that marks every one of us in this journey we are on, seeking a unified life—with creation, with each other, with God.

| Invitation

Who have you depended on along the way to live, grow and flourish?

| Prayer

Gracious God, move our minds and our hearts to widening, to opening, to reaching out in the spirit of the love that is your essence. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

April 13

Lectio Divina

Gospel: Luke 19:28-40

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

| Silence

| Reading Aloud

| Meditation

| Sharing

THURSDAY

April 14

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come.

— *Revelation 19:6-9*

| Reflection

An entire day during Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, is dedicated to bread and feet. Jesus started and ended his ministry with a dinner party, with replenishing the wine at the wedding in Cana, and ripping bread with disciples at the Last Supper.

Rather than a beginning and end, though, they are a beginning and middle—another feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb, awaits us. And that too, will be an end and a beginning. Imagine that someday party: olive branches, diadems, dirty toes. A meal makes us who we are, and every time we partake, we rehearse.

| Invitation

If it is in your tradition, receive Holy Communion today. Pay attention to the way the elements feel inside your mouth: the softness and the pungency. How can your body act as a portal to the grand narrative at the center of our hearts?

| Prayer

God who feeds us, we open our mouths wide to receive your nourishment. May we taste and see that you are good. Attune us to how we may prepare a table for others.

GOOD FRIDAY

April 15

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
and are so far from my cry
and from the words of my distress?
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer;
by night as well, but I find no rest.
Yet you are the Holy One,
enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
Our forefathers put their trust in you;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
They cried out to you and were delivered;
they trusted in you and were not put to shame.
But as for me, I am a worm and no man,
scorned by all and despised by the people.

— *Psalm 22:1-6*

| Listening Meditation

Preludes, Op. 32, No. 12 in G-sharp minor *by Sergei Rachmaninoff*

SATURDAY

April 16

Lord,
it is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.

The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
rest in you.

The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.

In your name we pray.
Amen.

— *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

| Listening Meditation

“Woman’s Prayer” by George Gurdjieff, Anja Lechner, Vassilis Tsabropoulos

