

Trinity Church
Daily

Devotions for Lent



Epigraph

Lent invites us to make our hearts ready for remembering Jesus' passion and celebrating Jesus' resurrection. ... As a period of preparation, Lent has historically included the instruction of persons for baptism and profession of faith on Easter Sunday; the calling back of those who have become estranged from the church; and efforts by all Christians to deepen their piety, devotion, and readiness to mark the death and resurrection of their Savior. As such, the primary focus of the season is to explore and deepen a "baptismal spirituality" that centers on our union with Christ rather than to function only as an extended meditation on Christ's suffering and death.

- Emily Brink and John D. Witvliet, *The Worship Sourcebook*, pages 551-552

Introduction

Jesus said: “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.” Matthew 10:42 (NIV)

For the last six years, our church family has created a Lenten Devotional. It has been a work of faith and hope and, perhaps mainly, love. Each has been a gift given for the glory of God and the good of our community of faith. You are now reading the seventh of Trinity’s Lenten Devotionals and it has much to offer you, but allow me to take a different tack than the introductions I’ve written for the last six devotionals and be much more personal.

You see, I have read this book like a Thanksgiving dinner—so many rich offerings consumed in one long sitting. It has been wonderful and it has also been a lot to take in all at once. You, on the other hand, will receive the contents of this book like “a cup of cold water,” which will refresh and strengthen and inspire you. I know that because I think you and I are quite a bit like one another. So here’s the (hopefully not overly) personal part.

My Thanksgiving-dinner-like reading of these devotions took place while I was recovering from surgery. I had passed from the pain-filled days to the it-only-hurts-when-I-move stage. From there, I’d gotten to that phase of feeling much better but still dealing with what seemed to be unconquerable fatigue. The time had come to finish the preparation of this year’s Devotional. Susan Bastnagel and Pam Dougherty had already done a wonderful job of copy editing all the devotions we’d received—thank you, Susan and Pam! So I sat in my recliner and began reading; I wasn’t in a very good frame of mind. I was feeling a bit sorry for myself and I was missing the regular routine of my life but I kept reading.

And it happened....like cups of cold water in a dry, weary land, the gift of God’s Word and the gift of fellow Christians telling about their life in Christ began to refresh me and strengthen me and inspire me. Over and over again, a story or a phrase was used by the Holy Spirit to give help and encouragement.

I believe that if you will let this Lenten Devotional be a companion for this holy season, you, too, will find God’s kindness surprising you in gentle and meaningful ways throughout our journey to Easter. I pray you will find this booklet is filled with many cups of cold water to renew your soul and then, your discipleship.

I would like to take this moment, as you begin the Lenten journey, to thank all of those who have contributed to Trinity’s Lenten Devotional 2019. Beside Susan and Pam, Alysia Sieh Badskey once more oversaw the formatting and production of the Devotional.

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We owe all three a debt of deep thanks. I also would like to thank the chair of the Adult Ministries Committee, Elder Larry Miller, for his support and continued reaching out to our members, inviting people to write a devotion. We owe Larry and the entire AMC (Bill Kain, Barb DeSanto, Eby Banas, Joan Cohen, Linda Thorpe, Margaret Gammie, Stacey Blackmer, Michele Strobel and Kim Windt) our gratitude for their faithful work. Thanks to our 28 authors who have written for us, each offering cups of cold water to fellow disciples: may they, as the Lord said, “not lose their reward.”

As you move through this devotional, you will find that, on weekdays (Monday-Friday), the devotion follows the common format of Scripture passage, devotional thought, and closing prayer. On Saturday, a prayer has been selected from the wealth of the Christian tradition; you will find a medieval Italian nun and a sixteenth-century French Reformer pray with us, as does a second-century African theologian and a modern-day prophet from America. From different times and geographies, they will help us voice our Lenten prayers. In the Western Church, Sundays are not part of Lent since Sundays are always days of celebrating Christ's Resurrection and are technically exempt from Lenten observance. For our Sunday devotional time, we have given the reading from one of the four Gospels suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary. Each Sunday, as the new week begins, the Gospel message can again more deeply impact our Lenten journey as we once again walk the holy path, following Jesus Christ in the way of the Cross all the way to Resurrection and on to Ascension.

I hope that each devotion will be a gift for you—a spiritual cup of cold water—and that you will be able to daily have time to slow down and to read, pray and meditate as these devotions help us to follow Jesus. I am sure that all those on the Adult Ministries Committee join me in praying for all of us in the Trinity family: May God use these devotions and our time with the Lord to enable us to travel on with the Lord, Jesus Christ. May God make it so for all of us. Amen!

With My Prayers and Asking for Yours,
Gregory

Day 1

ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2019

Luke 24:13-35

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem and talking with each other...

We can learn a lot from this meeting of Jesus and the disciples. That day Jesus rose from the dead. But later that day, Jesus assumed the role of a humble traveling companion.

Sometimes we do not recognize God's presence because we are overburdened with our troubles and daily activities.

Jesus was so patient as the two disciples talked about his death and his rising from the dead, as if Jesus did not already know of all the events. When we pray, there are times when we are not telling God anything he does not already know. He simply lets us express ourselves in prayer. He is a good listener.

In the scripture, when Jesus finally reveals himself, the disciples are overjoyed. It is that joy we feel when we realize God is listening, walking with us and sharing his time with us.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for listening to my prayers and helping me through trying times.

Day 2

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2019

Isaiah 40:3

Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness. Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah is quoted several times in the New Testament, as well by writers who have grown up in the tradition of learning the prophecies of Isaiah.

Where is this wilderness or desert in Cherry Hill? Where is this road that needs work to make it acceptable for the Lord to travel? What does this mean? Are we to take up pick and shovel, getting our hands dirty with physical labor? Do we have to move boulders or fill in potholes? Not at all.

This is an instruction from a famous prophet of God, to get our own house in order, so we may receive our God in our heart and mind. If we cannot settle our minds to listen to the Word of God, then we cannot fully accept the messages for our lives he is trying to teach us. If there are troubles and chaos around us when we pray, we may miss the still small voice that God (Jesus Christ in the New Testament) sends to us.

When you pray, find a quiet place and time, leave the turmoil of events behind, allow your thoughts to center on listening to the Lord. This is the way to “smooth the road” as you communicate with our God, Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord, when I pray, let me calm my thoughts, and see only the path to you which I have made ready. I am ready to LISTEN.

Ed Sanborn

Day 3

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

These Scripture verses talk about the aspects of a sinful nature. With four kids, it's easy to get bogged down with jealousy, discord, and idolatry, both my own and theirs. Jealousy between siblings over material things and among children and their peers. Discord among all family members over petty nonsense. Idolatry over material goods that take over too much time and attention.

Instead of focusing on what is bad, I choose to think about what is good, things I can strive for. What I'd like to do is think more about patience – my patience with them and theirs with each other; gentleness – in both speech and deed for all of us; self-control – from all of us when it concerns items such as computer time or attention from others. We all need to focus on our faithfulness, which encompasses the love of Christ and the joy of being a chosen child of God. By looking towards the positive, instead of the negative, we are already one step closer to a Godly nature and our own heavenly rewards.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to focus on the positive we can incorporate into our lives. Make us living vessels of the fruit of your Spirit. Amen.

Michele Strobel

Day 4

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2019

Lord Jesus Christ,
I admit that I am weaker and more sinful
than I ever before believed,
but, through you,
I am more loved and accepted
than I ever dared hope.
I thank you for paying my debt,
bearing my punishment
and offering forgiveness.
I turn from my sin and receive you as Savior. Amen.

Tim Keller, (born, 1950) is a Presbyterian pastor and author.

Day 5

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 10, 2019

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.

Day 6

MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2019

Genesis 18:1-8

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my LORD, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way - now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say." So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread." Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

Hospitality, or entertainment of a stranger as a guest, was recognized throughout the Mediterranean world as a sacred duty. Abraham and Sarah's entertainment of three strangers (angels?) by the oaks of Mamre was seen as an important "God" experience. Even enemies were given three days of safety after eating with a host. To Bedouins and to Jews, hospitality was an expression of righteousness. There are many other illustrations of "hospitality" in the Bible. We could even surmise that Jesus feeding the 5,000 encouraged others to extend "hospitality" to those around them.

In our busy world, we often fail to be hospitable to another person. It takes time to listen, to assure them of their worth! During this Lenten season, let us seriously consider how we may become a more hospitable church. How many times have you spoken to an obvious visitor or someone you do not know?

Let me challenge all of us: When we pause during the service to Pass the Peace, do NOT make a dash to your friend! Instead, go to the person who is alone - or the person sitting four rows in front of you whom you do not know – and introduce yourself! Offer to walk with this person to the Social Hall for the coffee hour and introduce him or her to others – including your friend!

On the whole, we are not a "Frozen Chosen" church! Let's take our hospitality seriously during Lent, and beyond, and become "The Friendly Church in Cherry Hill."

Prayer: I pray that I will recognize we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Help me to remember the greatest Christian service we can give to our loved ones and those in our community is the same hospitality that God has given to us through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Opal Stockwell

Day 7

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2019

Jeremiah 1:4-8

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” But then the Lord God said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”

An interesting aspect of call stories in the Holy Scriptures is that the one called often puts up excuses. Jeremiah said he was too young. Moses said he was not a public speaker. Esther objected that she would be in danger. Peter demurred because he was “a sinful man.” Mary said that the whole idea was impossible. And, yet, the call came and the Almighty used them, in spite of their uncertainty of being fit for the call.

Does it ever seem that you are not worthy of God’s love for you? Do you sometimes think that God made a mistake when enlisting you in the divine mission? Well, you’re in good company!

Prayer: God of surprising grace, I have heard your call to live as your dear child. Sometimes I cannot believe you have truly given me this vocation—it seems too great and, to be honest, too much. Help me to trust you; enable me to find in your call upon my life the freedom to rest in your love and to serve you with gladness. For Christ’s sake I ask it. Amen.

Greg Faulkner

Day 8

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

Philippians 4:4 NIV and The Message

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Why do I still go to church? Perhaps, it's because of the music from my childhood, and especially this song:

Rejoice in the Lord always,
And again I say rejoice!
Rejoice in the Lord always,
And again I say rejoice!
Rejoice, Rejoice
And again I say rejoice!
Rejoice, Rejoice
And again I say rejoice!

Sung in a round, in Vacation Bible School or summer camp at Mt. Misery, that little song brought joy to my heart. I knew what community meant when I sang it. I was not alone in my beliefs, sitting around the campfire, singing with my friends. It just felt good.

Little did I know what that song was really about. Chapter 4 in Philippians is one more wonderful interpretation of what God wants from us: not holding grudges; working side by side to work things out; women and men, supporting each other, following Christ, without fret or worry, joining together in prayer.

Through song, I believe we can shape our worries into prayers. Singing, alone or together, can bring us closer to God. "Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies" (Philippians 4:9b, the Message).

Prayer: God of peace, cause us to rejoice in you always, in song and in prayer. Help us to ask you for what we need. In your name, we pray, through song. Amen."

Kristi Paulson

Day 9

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2019

Matthew 14: 25-31

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

When I hear the opening lines of Hootie and the Blowfish's "Hold My Hand," I think of the verses from Matthew 14. I assume that those lines—which were written by lead singer Darius Rucker (of the amazing voice) and his bandmates—were influenced by Rucker's gospel roots, although I've never found confirmation of that. He sings: "With a little love, and some tenderness, We'll walk upon the water, We'll rise above this mess, With a little peace, and some harmony, We'll take the world together, We'll take 'em by the hand." Obviously, the song's content doesn't totally follow the Bible story, but the opening lines hit home.

The "walk on the water" story, which appears in three of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, and John), has always been a favorite of mine. The verses remind me not just to recommit to following Jesus but consciously to walk toward him. These verses from Matthew challenge me to step out of the safety of my personal boat and walk toward Jesus on the uncertain surface of the water. They remind me both to have faith and to find new ways to meet Jesus. In 2018, Trinity selected a similar message, "Stepping out in Faith," to challenge the congregation to increase support both of our work for Trinity and our mission work with those less fortunate than we are. That kind of commitment can take us all out of our individual comfort zones, be they physical or fiscal, while building our faith that Jesus will be there to meet us.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ, your Son, who tells us not to be afraid and to put our faith in him. Strengthen that faith so that we can step out on to the water, walk toward him, and commit again to joining him in the good work he is doing among us. Amen.

Margery Sly

Day 10

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2019

Isaiah 19:19-25

In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

When Isaiah was writing this portion of his account, Assyria was an ascendant power in the Biblical world. It had already conquered many kingdoms, had subjugated the northern kingdom of Israel, and was likely knocking on the door of the southern kingdom of Judah itself, causing terror among the communities. The Israelites began to fear a second captivity, much like the earlier Exodus in Egypt, whose painful memories were still passed down through the reading of the Torah.

It was amazing, then, that Isaiah should foretell of a time when these two powerful foes of Israel would be joined with Israel in one holy alliance, in unified worship of the one true God. They, along with all of the other enemies of Israel, would be conquered not just for the purposes of outright destruction, but for being brought into a common bond of praise, to become part of the blessed family of God. What a wonderful scene of worship and harmony this would be, where all enemies would be united, forgiven, and accepted at one table.

Prayer: Dear Lord, hasten the day when all who are in disagreement and war with each other will be reconciled, and join their voices with the heavenly chorus to recognize You and to sing holy praise. Amen.

Day III

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2019

O Prince of Peace,
to all who receive You,
You bright light and peace.
Help me to live in daily contact with You,
listening to the words You have spoken and obeying them.

O Divine Child,
I place my hands in Yours;
I shall follow You.
Oh, let Your divine life flow into me. . . .

O my God,
fill my soul with holy joy,
courage and strength to serve You.
Enkindle Your love in me and then walk with me
along the next stretch of road before me.
I do not see very far ahead,
but when I have arrived where the horizon now closes down,
a new prospect will open before me and I shall be met with peace.
How wondrous are the marvels of your love.
We are amazed,
we stammer and grow dumb,
for word and spirit fail us.

Edith Stein (1891-1942) was a German Jewish philosopher who converted to Christianity and became a Roman Catholic nun in the Order of Discalced Carmelites, taking the religious name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Day 12

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 17, 2019

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.' "

Day 13

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2019

MUSING ON THORNS AND ROSES

Matthew 13: 24, 26, 28-29

The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. His slaves said to him: "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" He replied "No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them."

My wife loves roses with a passion. I always know she has been around her flowers and roses because she has that air of lilted serenity. I love roses, too, but in a distant kind of way. I love the caressing smell and the eye-riveting beauty. Alas, the roses have to be trimmed, mulched and fertilized and I realized that, as a friend of mine used to say, "There are thorns in them roses." The roses, I'm sure, can sense my preference for a long-distance relationship and in some dimly understood way command the thorns to get under my skin. Have you noticed that inanimate objects sometimes exhibit seemingly spiteful behavior? Screen doors snap back to smash your nose, rugs curl up so they can snag your toes and, in my case, thorns sneak up to catch me in their prickly embrace. Charles Ester, author of *There's a Word for It*, termed this "resistentialism."

The parable of the wheat and the weeds brings to focus the existence of two entities: good and bad. How would things be if there were only sunny days without the storms or pleasure without the pain? Why, we often ask ourselves, do bad things happen to good people? This was the title of a popular book several years ago. If man's reason for existence as stated in our Trinity Confessions is to glorify God, would it be not more glorious if there were no cancer, pain, immorality or legal woes? Roses without thorns? In a skewed way, I would paraphrase Shakespeare: "Would a rose without thorns still smell as sweet? And yet, are not thorns and roses nourished by the same branch and do they not suck the same life-giving sap?"

St. Augustine faced a situation similar to the one faced by the farmer in the parable of the wheat and weeds. There were priests who, at the time of persecutions, denied the Church and teachings of Jesus and some even committed obvious sins. The demand of the day was to let go all the priests who were less than priestly in their duties regardless of their sins: minor, major, venial or mortal. Augustine's solution was the same as the farmer's parable: "Let them grow together until harvest. Then collect the weeds for burning and gather the wheat into my barn."

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Sometimes I wonder why weeds grow more luxuriously than flowers, even though they receive no care from the gardener. The roses will fade but look at the thorns: they stand like proud sentinels in the night long after what they were guarding succumbs to time. I am reminded of James Russel Lowell's poem *Once to Every Man and Nation* that we sometimes sing at Trinity. The last paragraph reads: "Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the truth alone is strong; though her portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne is wrong; yet the scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown, standeth God behind the shadow, keeping over His own."

Prayer: Lord, teach us once again that faith consists not in believing that nothing untoward will happen to us but in believing that whatever happens, You are with us.

Eby L. Banas, M.D.

Day 14

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019

Psalm 37: 7

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Ecclesiastes 3: 11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

As Christians, we are asked to take a long view, a **very** long view, a view from here to eternity. But how hard it is for us to be patient, to be still before the Lord, to believe in His plan. We have very little idea what His plan is. Could we please see something in writing? Something laid out in terms we can relate to? Maybe agree with? But it **is** in writing, written by Old Testament prophets and psalmists and in New Testament gospels and letters. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun. From Ecclesiastes (10th c. BC) to today (21st c. AD), we still observe such ongoing injustice! How can we be still and wait? We are so very human. We can never fathom God's plan, his eternity.

The lesson is to have faith, to believe in the love, forgiveness and redemption He gives us. One way to do this is to read scripture. Let it sit on our hearts to be absorbed. I can feel its power as I am reading it now. Note to self: do this more often! So, we return to "be still before the Lord." Concentrate on His goodness. Let the evil and confusion of this world be set aside in the quiet. Remember He has made everything beautiful in its time. I think of the faces of loved ones, of our new babies in the family. How beautiful, how eternal.

In our quiet moments of prayer and reading God's Word, we **can** find the beauty and comfort we need to continue our *oh* so human lives. Perhaps we can come to terms with our impatience and short view, of how we think things should be according to **our** plan. We can work toward being still and finding beauty in His presence.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, giver of all things beautiful and wise, hear my prayer for patience and a longer view. May this be so for all of us. Amen.

Julie Blair

Day 15

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2019

I <3<3 (*heart*) CHURCH TOO!

1 John 4:16

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

On a recent Sunday morning, I was wrapping up my routine duties as an usher after the church service, sprucing up a section of the pews and grabbing the top page of the fellowship registers for the office. As I opened up a fellowship register near the front of the church, I noticed a young girl had signed in with her family. Across from her name, she had written in large, child-like penmanship "I <3 <3 (*heart*) church." It was one of those moments where I couldn't help but stop for a second and smile.

This moment has led me to reflect on my own feelings for church, and in particular THIS church.

My love for Trinity started during commissioning and was re-ignited nearly 15 years ago when the church warmly embraced me and my family after the passing of my father, Charles. Coming back home to Trinity brought particularly my mother and me comfort, strength, and love we could not have found anywhere else at such a difficult time. A few years after I began attending services regularly again, I was called to become a Deacon. That experience has taught me the power in serving the Lord by serving others. Through this and other opportunities, ranging from Senior High Fellowship to adult mission trips to volunteering at Cathedral Kitchen and the Cherry Hill Food Pantry, I have gotten to know so many of my fellow members, some of whom are now among my dearest friends. Week to week, I love how much Trinity has to offer through worship, education, and fellowship in Christ. I can't imagine my life without it. Yes, I <3<3 (*heart*) church, too!

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the comfort and strength you give to me each and every day through the grace of Jesus Christ and for all of those at Trinity who walk with me in faith. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Brian Hamilton

Day 16

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2019

Matthew 5:15-16

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We all have different bushels. What's yours? What is that bushel that is making it difficult for you to achieve Jesus' command?

Is it your family? "Oh, if my children weren't so young," you may say, "then I could be more involved." But when will they be old enough for you to commit to a larger role in your Christian life? Do you have specific ages in mind?

Maybe your bushel is your job. "If things weren't so hectic at work, then I'd have some time." When is that time when things will be less hectic? A month from now? A year or two? How can you be sure?

Perhaps your bushel is a sense of inadequacy. "Oh, I could never be an elder, or a Circle leader or a Sunday School teacher or a..." You fill in the blank. Why not? Sometimes a committed "Yes" is more than 70 % of the job.

Is your bushel choosing to let others in your family be the lights? It's wonderful to nurture and support the involvement and commitment of a parent, a sibling, a spouse or a child; but basking in their glow is not letting your own light shine.

Maybe your bushel is "I've done that before. Now it's someone else's turn." Who's counting turns? Being totally involved in your Christian life often means shining again and again and again in the same roles over a period of time. And why not? Why not you again?

Yes, we are the lights of the world. Jesus told us so. Now, if we can only get rid of all those bushels, we'll really set the world aglow.

Prayer: Dear God, help me grow in my Christian life and respond when I am needed. Help me get rid of the bushels in my life and let my light shine.

Linda Thorpe

Day 17

FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2019

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

At times the call to follow Christ can seem demanding and difficult. Then we come to this passage which is very comforting. Jesus promises that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Still, it can seem contradictory as well.

Yokes are no longer familiar objects to us in 21st century New Jersey. I have seen some in Colonial Williamsburg, and other historic farmsteads. They are worn by oxen around their necks and are used to connect traces to wagons or other heavy loads. They are constructed of rough wood and look heavy and uncomfortable. Just wearing a yoke looks difficult, let alone pulling a heavy wagon. How can that be easy and light?

In trying to understand the meaning of this passage I realize that not following God's commandments can lead to harder consequences than following them. Of course, even Christians face trying and difficult times, but following Christ can lead to inner peace and contentment. As Benjamin Franklin put it in *Poor Richard's Almanack*, "Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, it is forbidden because it is hurtful." This is why laboring or acting for the wrong reasons can lead to disappointment, fatigue or even worse. Taking Christ's yoke leads to rest for our souls.

I am reminded of the refrain of the hymn "When We Walk with the Lord":

Trust and obey,
Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey.

Prayer: Lord, give us the courage to take up Your yoke and do as You would have us do. Help us to know the work You would have us do and to follow Your way. Let us learn from Your Word, trust You, and find contentment for our souls.

Doug Gammie

Day 18

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019

“Master, they say that when I seem
To be in speech with you,
Since you make no replies, it’s all a dream
– One talker aping two.

They are half right, but not as they
Imagine; rather, I
Seek in myself the things I meant to say,
And lo! the wells are dry.

Then, seeing me empty, you forsake
The Listener’s role, and through
My dead lips breathe and into utterance wake
The thoughts I never knew.

And thus you neither need reply
Nor can; thus, while we seem
Two talking, thou art One forever, and I
No dreamer, but thy dream.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was a British scholar, writer and lay theologian. Of his many books, his *The Chronicles of Narnia* series is perhaps his most well-known work.

Day 19

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 24, 2019

Luke 13:1-9

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Day 20

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019

ALL I DID WAS ASK

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Lily was 44. After years of infertility treatments, she was pregnant with triplets. But things were not going well. Two of the triplets had died in her womb. She was in crisis. Lily was only half-way through her pregnancy and her blood pressure was dangerously high. She could have a stroke or a seizure at any moment. Most concerning was that her blood pressure was not responding to the medication. The doctor came in and informed Lily of the seriousness of her condition. Lily pleaded with her to prolong the pregnancy for two more weeks so that the baby might survive. Very gently and with compassion, the doctor explained, "Lily, I don't know if I can keep you pregnant through the night." Lily tried to hold back tears to no avail. "I know this is my last chance. If this little boy doesn't make it, I'll never have children." Her sobs cut right through my heart. Lily had told me earlier that she was Catholic. I'd been with patients in their lowest, most desperate places before, so I asked her, "Lily, would you like to pray?" She nodded. We held hands and I began to pray with her. Another physician came in and saw what we were doing. He placed a hand on each of our shoulders and joined us in prayer.

Even with a hospital Pastoral Care Program there remains a need to seize the moment and be present when a patient is at the lowest of her low. Spiritual care is an integral part of patient care, but it is often avoided because we fear discomfort or self-consciousness. We can do something. We can call upon the Chaplain, pray with them or offer to put them on our prayer list. Studies have shown that patient outcomes improve when people know that someone is praying for them.

The outcome for Lily was a miracle. Her blood pressure came down and remained under control. Five weeks from her due date, Lily went into spontaneous labor and was delivered. Her baby boy was cared for in the NICU for three weeks and then went home with Lily and her husband. That night of desperation had become a day of absolute joy. All I did was ask...

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to remember your steadfast love for us. We pray that you will be present when we are at the lowest of our low. Give us the courage we need to call upon you in our work environment to help our colleagues and patients in their time of need. Amen.

Nancy Parks

Day 21

TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2019

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

While faith is fundamental to our Christian theology, maintaining faith at all times and in all situations can be a challenge. As an engineer, I was taught that everything needs to follow the physical laws of science. As a businessperson, I quickly learned that problems were solved by collecting and analyzing data and implementing corrective action. In these environments, lack of structure and control will surely result in failure. Therefore, having the courage to allow God to take control, especially during difficult times, is a true test of my faith. To always believe that something prayed/hoped for has the same “substance” as a physical asset requires an inner confidence that God will answer our prayers.

As true Christians, we must have this level of faith. Our relationship with God must be one where we are confident of his existence. We must believe that when sought through prayer, he will “reward” us. However, there are times when our prayers are not answered (to our satisfaction). This can test our faith and trust in God. However, a belief in God’s existence and power comes from a trust in things not seen or fully understood – and, in the end, a belief that this faith will be rewarded.

Prayer: Lord, bless me with the gift of faith. Give me the courage and wisdom to strengthen my trust in you. Allow me to surrender my life to you and believe you will answer my prayers. Help me to understand your plan and have the faith to respond to your call. With deep faith in you, I pray. Amen.

John Young

Day 22

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019

1 Chronicles 11:22

“Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds; he struck down two sons of Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen.”

Like many Trinity members, every year I look forward to my star word and trying to figure out how I can apply it for my life in the coming year. This year though, I got the word “motivating” and to be honest, my excitement level wasn’t that high. I feel like that is a lot of what I’m already called to do, and I wanted to ask God, “How much more motivating am I supposed to do?”

Then a few weeks later I was at a youth event where they asked us to name our favorite bible stories. I threw out a random obscure story to see how the kids would react, but I started reflecting on random verses that have made a difference in my life. This verse from 1 Chronicles was the one that kept coming back.

Right after I graduated seminary, I thought I might be called to start a new program that brought youth from diverse Christian backgrounds together to serve and learn to communicate in the midst of their differences. It was something that seemed to be needed with the youth I worked with, and many people thought it was a great idea. So I tried to see if I could make it a reality. I came up with an outline for the program and approached churches all over Richmond from diverse backgrounds. But I ended up with two problems: it was right after one of the larger recessions when money was tight, so finding funding was very difficult; and, as a freshly graduated seminary student, I didn’t have as many connections as I needed for people to trust me with their youth in this new endeavor.

In the midst of trying to build this program and feeling disheartened, a friend gave me a book by Mark Batterson called *In a Pit With a Lion on a Snowy Day*. Batterson wrote a whole book that centered around this one verse and the idea that your greatest regret in life is the lions you didn’t chase. In the book he talked about taking risks and the importance of it even when we fail. The book motivated me to be thankful I took a risk and tried even though it didn’t turn out as I’d hoped.

The letters I did send out, though, caught the eye of one church, which was looking for a part-time youth director and coordinator for their international college ministries. While not exactly the avenue I planned originally, it led me to a diverse community that taught me so much and fed my soul in many ways.

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Lent is a time where we reflect on what Christ has done for us. What Christ did for us was radical and something new. Christ did it knowing not everyone would understand or accept his sacrifice. Every person Christ talked to didn't follow him. But Christ had the courage to try, and Christ desired to change our understanding of what God is calling us to in our lives. We as humans are not good with change. It seems to go against our human nature, but during Lent I encourage you to take a risk, follow where God is leading you even if it's new and scary. Don't be afraid to fail because God is moving in and through us. Theodore Roosevelt said, "The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything."

Prayer: Merciful Lord, we thank you for your Son and his willingness to risk everything and love us in our imperfections. Help me to see the ways that you are calling me into new life. May I have the courage to step out in faith and take risks, so that others might know your love and grace. Help me redefine what I see as success and failure and know that you work in the midst of all our endeavors. Amen.

Day 23

THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2019

Be not afraid, for I have redeemed you. Be not afraid: I have called you by name. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the floods, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be consumed. My love for you is everlasting. My love for you shall have no end. You are mine; you are precious in my sight.
(Words based on **Isaiah 43: 1-7**)

These are the words of the anthem sung by the choir right after the baptism of our son Lucas. In the Dutch Reformed congregation where I grew up, baptisms were preceded by a liturgical form; as kids, we found this way too long, because all we wanted was to see the adorable babies! However, when Rev. Faulkner offered to include elements from the Dutch tradition in the baptism service for Lucas, I immediately thought of that liturgy, because of its beautiful reminders about the meaning of baptism.

Baptism, the liturgy says, marks “[God’s] assurance to us that he makes an everlasting covenant of grace with us and adopts us as his children and heirs. Therefore, he surrounds us with his goodness and protects us from evil or turns it to our profit.” This is the same thought as that expressed in the words from Isaiah. Although it doesn’t mean that difficult or evil things will not happen to us, baptism reminds us that ultimately we belong to God, and that God will carry us through.

The liturgy continues with our responsibility: “Because all covenants have two sides, baptism also places us under obligation to live in obedience to God. We must cling to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We must trust him and love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. [...] If we through weakness should fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s grace, nor use our weakness as an excuse to keep sinning. For baptism is a seal and undisputable witness that we have an everlasting covenant of grace with God.”

While “falling into sin” may not be terminology we use on a daily basis, the concept may be more relatable to us when we think of sin as “missing the mark.” Maybe you were determined to be a more present spouse or parent this year, and you find yourself scrolling through your Facebook newsfeed while a loved one tells you about their difficulties. Or you resolved to be more open about your faith, but when a co-worker asks how your Sunday was, you mumble something about family and the Eagles but neglect to tell them about the worship service you attended. And yet, baptism reminds us that there is hope and grace for us, because God’s love does not depend on our weak efforts, but is based on his covenant with us.

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Prayer: Almighty and merciful God, I thank you for your everlasting love, and the sign of it which I received in baptism. Give me the courage to follow you with all my heart. May my life be an eternal song of praise to you, the one only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 24

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2019

BEST FRIEND AND KING

John 15:15-16

I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn't confide in his servants. Now you are My friends, since I told you everything the Father told Me. You didn't choose Me. I chose you.

1 Timothy 6:15

For at the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

I'm just an ordinary person. I've never met or expect to know anyone who is a celebrity, whether in show business, sports, high ranking government official, or even a member of the British Royal family! However, if any one of those people reached out and wanted to be friends with me, I know I'd be flattered and honored and would accept. I'd sure think it was special.

Recently, while I was reading my Bible, praying and meditating, I saw the scripture in John 15. I'm sure this wasn't the first time I ever read this passage, but this time it struck me in a new way. What a revelation! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, actually has chosen me to be His friend! He emphasizes the point that He chose me. I did not choose Him!

This is wonderful news! He is always with me—never on vacation, out of the room, checking His messages, or busy with somebody else. Even when He is with you, He is with me, too, because He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Nothing is impossible with God! There is never a place where I am that He isn't there. In His presence I am loved, protected, and given His peace, and I know that He will never leave me or forsake me.

Prayer: Dear God, I humbly thank you for choosing me to be your friend. I praise You for the awesome God You are and for your love, mercy and grace. I pray in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Liz Holderness

Day 25

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2019

O thou Eternal God,
out of whose absolute power and infinite intelligence
the whole universe has come into being.
We humbly confess
that we have not loved thee with our hearts, souls and minds
and we have not loved our neighbors as Christ loved us.
We have all too often lived by our own selfish impulses
rather than by the life of sacrificial love as revealed by Christ.
We often give in order to receive,
we love our friends and hate our enemies,
we go the first mile but dare not travel the second,
we forgive but dare not forget.
And so as we look within ourselves
we are confronted with the appalling fact
that the history of our lives
is the history of an eternal revolt against thee.
But thou, O God, have mercy upon us.
Forgive us for what we could have been but failed to be.
Give us the intelligence to know thy will.
Give us the courage to do thy will.
Give us the devotion to love thy will.
In the name and spirit of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) was a Baptist minister and prominent leader of the Civil Rights movement; he served as the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Coalition.

Day 26

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 31, 2019

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable:

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

"So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Day 27

MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2019

I Corinthians 22:12-13a

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body . . .

As we were baptized, we were spiritually—which is to say: really—joined to Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul uses the language of being Christ’s Body to explain our union with God. As the Body of Christ, we continue down through the ages to carry out the work of God here on earth. The writer, Frederick Buechner says it well in his book, *Peculiar Treasures*.

“When you came right down to it, what was God up to, for God's sweet sake, sending them all out—prophets, apostles, evangelists, teachers, the whole tattered bunch—to beat their gums and work themselves into an early grave?

“God was making a body for Christ, Paul said. Christ didn't have a regular body any more so God was making him one out of anybody he could find who looked as if he might just possibly do. He was using other people's hands to be Christ's hands and other people's feet to be Christ's feet, and when there was some place where Christ was needed in a hurry and needed bad, he put the finger on some maybe-not-all-that-innocent bystander and got him to go and be Christ in that place himself for lack of anybody better.”

It’s both uplifting and sobering to consider being Christ’s hands and feet on earth. It’s a big job but also a wondrously joyful task.

Prayer: Lord of All, how amazing that you have made me part of your work in the world! Help me to do my best to serve you, knowing that by your Spirit, you have united me to the Body of Christ. Fill me with Christ’s joy and hope and peace even as I live in him and he lives in me. I ask this all in Christ’s Name. Amen.

Greg Faulkner

Day 28

TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2019

Psalm 121:1-2

*I lift up my eyes to the hills
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and Earth.*

During the 1950s, it was popular to strip the land before putting up a housing development and then plant baby trees in the narrow space between the sidewalk and the street. It does make for shade in summer and color in the fall. However, as many of us know, it makes for a tricky walk on the sidewalks as the trees have grown and the roots have dislodged a great many of the blocks of sidewalk in most developments. Many people have opted to walk, run and push strollers in the street but I think that is asking for trouble!

I enjoy taking a walk in nice weather. Last summer I was walking the way I usually do, with my head down and eyes looking for the next crack, bump or other source of danger when I heard a beautiful bird song above my head. I didn't recognize the song and I couldn't see the bird but I stopped and looked all around. The sky was a lovely blue, the trees were green and gently swaying. It hit me smack between the eyes that I had learned an important lesson. Walking with downcast eyes prevents me from seeing all the beauty around me! I need to "lift my eyes" in everything I do. Focusing on the cracks, bumps, bruises and problems keeps me from enjoying all the blessings, joy and beauty that are present in my life. I now try to remember to keep uplifted and thank God for all the wonderful gifts he has given!

Prayer: Father, what a wonderful teacher you are! What wonderful things are in store by looking up! I will try to keep my eyes lifted up to you! Thank you for all the big and small delights in my life!

Day 29

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2019

MUSINGS ON THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH

John 9: 24-25

So the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise. We know that this man is a sinner." He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I know is that I was blind and now I see."

I was in the middle of the Kentucky-Tennessee Chess championship game and I knew I was in trouble. An ill-conceived gambit exposed my king and to avoid the capture of my king I had to sacrifice my knight for two pawns leaving me materially behind. In the next few moves I realized my opponent's strategy. He wanted to simplify the game by exchanging piece for piece and at the end he will have one more piece than me. My only winning plan was to avoid the exchange and make the game as complicated as possible, hoping that his efforts to simplify will lead him to a trap.

I remembered this chess game while I was reading John's account of the blind man's healing. The Pharisees could not accept the simple fact that the man who was blind could now see. They complicated the matter by asking him how he was healed, who healed him, and even told him that the one who healed him is a sinner because he did not keep the Sabbath. They even called the blind man's parents to question the identity of their son. The man's answer was simple. "I was blind but now I see."

William of Ockham, a theologian and philosopher in the 1300s, popularized what is now called Ockham's Razor. "A problem and its solution," he said, "must be stated in its basic and simplest terms. All things being equal, the simplest explanation is usually the correct one." In science, the simplest theory that fits the facts of the problem is the one that should be selected. Agatha Christie once wrote: "You gave too much rein to your imagination. Imagination is a good servant but a poor master." The simplest explanation is the most likely. If you hear hoofbeats, think horses first instead of zebras. Physicists before Einstein wrote blackboards of equations to explain the relationship between energy and matter. What could be simpler than $E=mc^2$?

In *Auguries of Innocence*, William Blake tried to condense the complex to the simple:

To see the World in a Grain of Sand, and a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, and Eternity in an hour.

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My faith is a tangle of the simple and the complex. And I suspect it is true for most of us. I wonder how could I be chosen before the foundation of the world instead of just opening the door when He knocks? Am I saved because God's righteousness was imputed to me or because it was infused? How does divine impassibility square with the idea that God's love is relational? Why can I not just say: I was blind but now I see?

Ouch! I have been wounded by Ockham's razor and the hesitation cuts hurt.

Prayer: Father, help me to have faith like the blind man's faith and, through that blindness see truth, grace, faith, hope and love in their utter simplicity.

Day 30

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2019

Isaiah 60: 1

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

This past August, I traveled with a group of Trinity women to Louisville, KY for the Triennial PW Gathering. Isaiah 60:1 was the theme, the thread woven through four days of worship, study, fellowship and planning. We sang. We prayed. We worshiped. All the while, we celebrated Christ's light in our lives. The word "Arise" shouted out to me then, as it does now. As believers, we must do more than rest in the light and glory of our Lord while accepting the grace God offers to us. We must **arise**—it is a verb.

Our actions, our prayers and our spirit must reflect God's glorious light back to the world. It's so easy for me to stay in my comfort zone and not venture into a wounded and sad world, but God challenges me—God challenges all of us—to arise, to move, to shine. For me, that means participating in some of Trinity's many Mission and Outreach Programs. For others, it might be offering prayers for a better world, or helping a needy neighbor or just letting that car merge into your lane on Route 70. However you act, however you arise, may it be with thoughtfulness and grace.

Prayer: May the glory and light of the Lord shine upon us and may we reflect His light to our world. Amen.

Jenny Stark

Day 31

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2019

Psalm 91: 11-12

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

I sit with Linda as she receives her latest infusion of medication for her reemergent renal cell carcinoma and think of our journey to this time and this place. I thank God, not that we like where we are, but for what we encountered on our way. When we found out that Linda's cancer episode of seven years ago had resurfaced and metastasized to her liver, lung, and pancreas, we made a decision of where we wanted to go to have it treated. That was the start of our journey and the start of encounters with all of the "Angels" who surround her. The doctors and nurses who have helped us and guided us have been magnificent. They have all shined their light on us as we continue to move forward. I sit and hope that all of those with whom we have dealt know what a blessing they have been and continue to be in our lives. I never thought I would ever meet an angel, but now I realize that they are all around us!

I also sit and wonder if, in my own life, when I have had a chance to be an angel, have I responded in a way that was pleasing to God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to be an "angel" in my daily life.

Day 32

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2019

Grant, Almighty God,
that as You shine on us by your Word,
we may not be blind at midday,
nor willfully seek darkness,
and thus lull our minds asleep:
but that exercising ourselves in Your Word,
we may stir up ourselves more and more to reverence Your name,
and thus present ourselves, and all our pursuits,
as an offering to You,
that You may peaceably rule and perpetually dwell in us,
until You gather us to Your celestial habitation,
where there is reserved for us eternal rest and glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French pastor and theologian, as well as the reformer who is considered the Father of Reformed Christianity.

Day 33

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, APRIL 7, 2019

John 12:1-11

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." When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Day 34

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019

I Timothy 2:1

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.

"I'll pray for you." It's a statement that I've uttered many times---maybe you have, too. Whether a friend has shared with me a health concern, outlined issues with family members or noted the loss of a job, it is the immediacy of the moment that prompts me to mention the prayer support that I will offer.

Notes, cards, calls, texts or even a casserole may come later as tangible responses; but the mention of prayer, I believe, shows the concern and support that is needed not only in the moment but also in on-going weeks or months.

Yes, as a Christian I've uttered that response and prayed for the afflicted many, many times; but being the recipient of such statements is, I have recently noted, a true blessing. Facing my second bout with a cancer that has now spread to other organs, I have shared my diagnosis with many who have responded with "I'll pray for you."

As news of my condition spread and I heard more and more of those offers of prayer, I noted that something amazing was happening. Every time someone uttered those words, I felt a sense of relief, a lightening of the burden of my disease. It was as if a little weight were lifted from me with each offer. With those statements, the burden of my illness now was not as onerous since it was also being shared by others who, praying for me, were truly lightening the load.

Four simple words...and yet they carry such import. The next time you acknowledge your support for a friend by offering prayers, do know that the hearer will be truly grateful.

Prayer: Dear God, You have urged us to pray for one another. Let us never forget how important those prayers are.

Day 35

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

We were at a funeral early this year and the preacher read a long scripture passage. The preacher ended his reading with the words quoted above, which seemed to hang in the air as he paused to begin his message. He went on to discuss how a person whose earthly life is ending may view the process with fear, but those who have faith in Christ will find peace even in times of suffering.

“Encourage one another,” Paul wrote. He understood that even the faithful will encounter hard times. Expectations will be disappointed. Faith will be tested. When we see others who are having difficulties and who seem to be faltering, we should give encouragement. At the funeral, I wondered if I was doing that and I made a mental note to think about Paul’s words.

Even if we are motivated, how will we know that others need encouragement? We will not know, unless we engage with other people. If we hold back, others may be in distress and we will not know about their troubles. If we *intentionally* fail to engage, we are edging close to abandoning others—in effect, making a decision to withhold our support even when they need help. We have to recognize too that we cannot know everything, and therefore we should encourage others at all times, and not just when we perceive that they are in need.

If we want to encourage others, how will we know what to do? We have to engage at a deeper level. We have to listen to others and be informed. Listening and expressing sympathy might be all that we can offer, and that alone might be the encouragement that someone needs. But they may need more, and it might be easy to give, if we know what it is.

Paul also told the Thessalonians to “build each other up” in the Bible version that was used by the preacher at the funeral. Are we doing that?

“Building somebody up” means more than flattery. It must mean, at a minimum, wanting to make other people stronger and better. It should be sincere. We need to do more than go through the motions. We need to want sincerely that others be stronger and better.

Paul told the Thessalonians that “indeed you are doing” what he was instructing. If he were writing to us, would he say that?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, make me mindful in all aspects of my life that I should encourage others—not just when they are having trouble but at all times—and seek to build them up so they can withstand troubles when they encounter them.

Tom Earp

Day 36

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Acts 20:35

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

My Epiphany star word for 2019 is "Blessed." Following the suggestion that we do a devotion based on our word, I found it offers a host of Bible verses--290 in the King James Bible—and settled on a classic and deceptively simple verse: "It is more blessed to give than receive." In the preceding verses, Paul reflects on his life of service and then quotes Jesus to the elders of Ephesus as he takes leave of them. Setting aside the theological quibble that nowhere in scripture is Jesus recorded as actually saying that phrase, is this verse as obvious as it seems? If we give to others, we'll receive a blessing and be happy?

During Advent, I shift into giving overdrive. There is shopping for presents for family and friends and opportunities to give to people I don't know but who are in need. I am also challenged to find a way to give throughout the year—and to give of myself rather than just writing a check. Only then will the blessing accrue to me.

But this verse is illuminated by Paul's message in the earlier verses. Paul is not trying to convince the elders to give more pledge money and get a blessing. He is reminding them to live as he lived—to give to Jesus and to give greatly. He is asking for a commitment to the Gospel of Christ itself. When we give to others and give in gratitude for God's gifts to us, we are, on a small-scale, preaching the Gospel message. That is *all* that Jesus asks of us.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, I thank you for the blessing that is Jesus Christ your Son. Help me to give to Him and through Him to others. Amen.

Day 37

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019

A LAYMAN'S MUSINGS ON SNOWFLAKES AND INFINITY

Psalm 103: 15-17

As for man his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower in the field; the wind blows and he is gone and the place remembers him no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him.

I first saw them at an airport in Chicago while I was descending in the airplane that took us from the Philippines to the US. Fragile frozen fractals falling from the winter firmament. I put out my tongue to taste the cascading coldness and I extended my hand to touch winter's frigid flakes. I realized that the falling snow is made up of thousands of little crystals. Of course, I did the tasting and touching surreptitiously so those near me would not know that I had never seen snow before.

So, let's talk about snowflakes. No, no; not the "snowflake" that was popularized by Chuck Palahniuk in his 1996 novel, *Fight Club*, and presently hurled by politicians at each other to describe somebody who is oversensitive and fragile. I'm talking about the flaky and hushed softness that gravity lays on the ground. "No two snowflakes are alike," meteorologists tell us, although the scientists are more reserved and just say...hmmmm.

There are basically 35 types of snowflakes but grouped mainly in three categories: dendrites, plates, and columns. Somehow when I see snow, I think of peace, calmness, and infinity. It snowed three inches in Colorado the other day and that meant billions and trillions of snowflakes. That number is almost infinite, although God usually uses sand to indicate an infinite number, as when He told Abraham that his children will be as numberless as the sand. I chose snowflakes because, given time, one could count sand, but not snowflakes since snowflakes dissolve.

The Psalmist, in the verses above, compared man's transient and evanescent nature to God's infinity. God's love is everlasting, and everlasting love can come only from someone Infinite. When I look at how we describe God I am struck by the inadequacy of our language. We described God not only positively as Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent, but also negatively as immortal, infinite, unchanging, and ineffable. He is not mortal or finite like us. Why is it that no snowflakes are alike? "It depends," meteorologists again say, "on the path they take from the sky to the ground." Once I tried to examine snowflakes to see if none were really alike but by the time I finished examining ten of them, the first one had already dissolved. But, let me tell you, the drops of water left by the snowflakes looked identical to me.

Maybe there is something similar between us and the snowflakes. We are transient and temporary, like grass or flowers in the field, as the Psalmist says, but what we are depends on the path we take, as the meteorologists say.

Prayer: Our Father, lead us to the correct path for we are finite and you Infinite; we change while you are unchanging.

Day 38

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

A few weeks ago, on Epiphany Sunday, we were encouraged to take “our” star for the coming year. I reached into the bowl and came out with the word FELLOWSHIP. Being a long-time member of this congregation and involved in many activities, committees, events, and the music program, I felt this was a word I could live by for the next 365 days. In so many ways I found myself thinking about time spent in worship with all of you, attending adult education offerings, serving on Session and singing in the choir; all times of fellowship as we live by the word of the Lord and are his disciples. Greeting one another with a smile, handshake or hug; holding open a door; signing cards for the home bound and those in need of being lifted up are all acts of fellowship. As we offer up prayers of the people each week we exhibit fellowship and discipleship, one with God as we pray as a congregation for the needs of others and ourselves.

For me, my greatest fellowship is Miriam Circle, a special group of sisters who complete me with their love, support, laughter, tears and prayers. Each in their own way lives the word Fellowship, and are such a blessing to know and love, and share joys and sorrows, meals and prayers. The fellowship of Circle has instilled a deeper understanding of my faith, moved me often out of my comfort zone, and afforded many opportunities of mission and serving others each month. Spend an afternoon at the R & M Boarding Home and you will leave with the feeling of fellowship, as the residents receive as much joy from our activities and food as we do in participating and serving them.

In whatever way you see yourself and your place here at Trinity, may you experience fellowship in all you do and with all you come in contact with. Be the first to greet someone, offer a handshake, smile, make friends and spread the love and warmth that this congregation is known for. In doing so, you will strengthen your fellowship with God and spread his Word by actions and deeds in the fellowship of others.

Prayer: May the grace of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us and those we love, now and forever. Amen.

Linda Flanary

Day 39

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019

Jesus, my feet are dirty.

Come even as a slave to me,
pour water into your bowl,
come and wash my feet.

In asking such a thing I know I am overbold,
but I dread what was threatened when you said to me,
“If I do not wash your feet I have no fellowship with you.”
Wash my feet then, because I long for your companionship.

Origen (c. 184–253) was born and lived most of his life in Alexandria, Egypt. A theologian and scholar, his prolific writings made him one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the early Church and continues to influence present-day theology.

Day 40

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY, April 14, 2019

Luke 23:32-56

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Day 41

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2019

Joshua 1:9

I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Isaiah 40: 28-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

I've been thinking about what I wanted to write for this year's devotional and as 2018 drew to a close, I began to realize that I was about to experience the grief of loss. When Googling the definition of loss, one of the responses was "the state or feeling of grief when deprived of someone or something of value."

Do you know and love someone who has endured treatment for a disease that you know will one day be the cause of their death? How can one's body sustain the impact of the treatment, yet allow the individual to still have hope that there will be just one more day to see the sun rise or set, cherish the beauty of a flower, or welcome the embrace of a friend?

Has someone you have known for decades relocated to another city and, thus, changed the rhythm of your interactions? The years it took to build that relationship are the same that will sustain it, albeit in a different shape and form.

I would imagine that these experiences are not unique to me; after all, loss is a reality of living. Even in times of loss, a plethora of memories keep all of our friends and loved ones close. We may even be reminded of them when we sit in the pews on Sunday. Recently, Brian Kain played two of my favorite songs, *On the Wings of Eagles* and the beloved hymn *Here I Am, Lord* in the same service. These two songs bring a great deal of comfort to me as I consider how fortunate I have been to have my friends and loved ones in my life.

I've read a few articles lately about "getting older" and the bottom line is that one has to live every day to the fullest, and it bears repeating. Here is an excerpt from a *New York Times* article by Mary Pipher "We may not have control, but we have choices. With intention and
continued on next page...

focused attention, we can always find a forward path. We discover what we are looking for. If we look for evidence of love in the universe, we will find it. If we seek beauty, it will spill into our lives any moment we wish. If we search for events to appreciate, we discover them to be abundant.” Enjoy the people and relationships that you have. Choose to be happy and content and surround yourself with the things and/or people that you love. Love your job, your purpose, your family, your friends. Love. Remember that, as Joshua reminds us, the Lord God is with you wherever you are.

Prayer: Dear Lord, wrap your loving arms around us as we continue the journey you have molded for us to experience. Be with us in challenging times as we constantly strive to determine our path forward. Encourage us to be welcoming and compassionate to those around us, as no one but you knows the degree of their suffering and their grief. Above all, walk by our side as we continue your work in our ever-changing world. Amen.

Day 42

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2019

Luke 15:32

But we had to celebrate and be glad, because a brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

I was angry with God! In less than 14 months, both of my parents and my wife of 33 years died. Why was God letting all this happen to me? It was not fair! As the Christmas holidays approached, I decided that I could not be at home; there were just too many memories to deal with at Christmas without these loved ones being present. So I booked a two-week trip to California to visit Disneyland and Universal Studios. That would surely be far enough away to help deal with my sadness.

While at Disneyland on Christmas Eve, I was reminiscing about the times when my wife and I would shop in a souvenir store when my son got impatient with me and pleaded for us to leave the store. I told him that I was not ready to leave and that he should keep himself busy in another part of the store. On one occasion, when I was finally ready to leave, I could not find him. After searching the store and then going back to the hotel room, I still could not find him. I decided to go back to the store; I found him sitting on a bench outside the store. When he saw the exasperated look on my face he said, "Mom always told me if we got separated to stay at the last place where we were together and she would find me."

That simple statement helped me to make a drastic change in my thinking. While I was sad over my recent losses, I also had almost lost my most treasured relationship – with God. I went to church that evening and reconnected with God. He was right where I left Him and was waiting for me with open arms.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please be with us even when we allow ourselves to be separated from You. Be patient with us. Allow us to discover that You have never left us and that You are waiting for us to return.

David Large

Day 43

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2019

To GLORIFY GOD

John 11:40

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you if you believe, you will see the glory of God."

I sat and listened attentively to the sermon: "Growing Impatient with the Patient God." The sermon was centered on the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The gospel reading was John 11: 1 – 45. Several times during the sermon, the reverend asked, "Why did Jesus wait three more days to go to Lazarus after hearing of his illness?" I'd read this story many times and Jesus tells us in John 11:4, "When he heard this Jesus said, 'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.' "

My interpretation is that glorifying God is synonymous with converting more believers and strengthening the faith of those present and everyone who ever hears the story. Is not raising Lazarus from the dead after he is already in the tomb four days much more miraculous than if Jesus had healed him before he died or than if he had just died? Then it dawned on me, I have first hand experience with a similar miracle.

I had worn hearing aids for 25 years. Then in 2011 I had an operation on my left ear. It was a re-visitation of an operation I had done to my left ear in 1985 and my right ear in 1987. This time it was to be done with a new generation of equipment and by a surgeon with a great track record of correcting hearing for people who also had this operation done before. The typical recovery time is from 1 to 2 weeks. So when I went back a week after the operation to get the packing removed from the operated ear, I was disappointed that I could not hear anything out of that ear.

At week 2, hearing tests showed that the operated ear was much worse than it had ever been. The doctor apologized for the failure. By week 4 the condition had not changed. The diagnosis became more discouraging. I became distraught.

A dear friend said to me, "Tom, things like this are on God's timetable, not yours." This got me thinking, I was being impatient. God will heal me when the time is right. In the following weeks I was put on the prayer list and everyone at Trinity was praying for me. While it looked less and less likely I would ever improve, I started to digest my new limitations, but continued to pray.

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Then at week 6 following the operation, miraculously, over a three day period, I realized my hearing was improving. Two days after I was sure of it! I had a follow up appointment with the surgeon. The appointment always begins with a hearing test. When the doctor came in to discuss the results, he was pleasantly surprised. It was a miracle indeed and my life took a great turn for the better. After 30 years, I hear better without hearing aids!!! Glory to God!

Does this story not strengthen the faith of all who hear it? If the surgery had gone according to plan, I'd have given complete credit to the surgeon. Sure, I give the surgeon great credit, but was God not guiding his hand? My perception is, it also took God's healing power to bring about this outcome. May my story, like the story of Lazarus, cause all who hear it to glorify God!

Prayer: God, thank you so much for answering my prayers and strengthening my faith. Please forgive me for not being patient, even when the odds seem slim. Help me to always remember, that with you, nothing is impossible. Amen.

Tom Tilsner

Day 44

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2019

Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided his garments and cast lots.

Matthew 18:35

So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

I am a person who has a lot of trouble letting go of a grudge. My favorite quote from the writing of Ann Lamont is "I'm not one of those Christians who's big into forgiveness."

My grudges are too numerous for me to mention, but Jesus' words when they took his garments evoke one particular memory. In the late sixties, I was a young college instructor, not much older than my students, and very proud to wear a cute little red coat that looked adorable with my mini-skirts. One night after a meal in the student cafeteria I went to the cloakroom and found that someone had made off with my coat. I never found out who took it and still, fifty years later, I have not forgiven the thief.

How different Jesus' reaction was from mine! In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), Jesus emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and the perils involved in not granting it to others. The fate of the servant in the parable teaches how an unforgiving spirit can have a crucial effect on our lives.

On the cross, Jesus bore the weight of our sins so that we might receive grace and, in turn, give it to others—even those who have wronged us. The sacrifice of His Son on the cross is God's miraculous gift of forgiveness for our sins. God has fully forgiven our debt; therefore, we should also forgive others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have taught us to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Thank you for forgiving my debts through the sacrifice of your Son. Help me as I strive to treat others with compassion and forgiveness.

Dottie Dunfee

Day 45

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019

Ephesians 2: 8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith---and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.

“By grace you have been saved.” It is a basic tenet of Christianity that has always been part of my religious background and faith. As I read it, though, I happened to think “what a difference a vowel makes.” The word is “by” not “buy.” A small change linguistically, but a monumental difference when we think about God's gift of Grace.

It is a gift we have been freely given--this gift of Grace. God has given us Grace outright. There is no price for us to pay, there are no goals to be met, no sacrifices to be made. It is a gift given out of his love for us. A gift that, through the blood and death of Jesus Christ, is set aside for those who believe.

How truly blessed we are by that benevolence. In the depth and breadth of human existence, has there ever been a greater gift?

Prayer: Dear God, we are blessed and humbled by your gift of Grace. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us as we respond in gratitude and faith to that gift by striving to be the best Christians we can be.

Day 46

SATURDAY, April 20, 2019

Look upon Him who became . . .
for your salvation, the lowest of men,
despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His whole body,
and then died amid the sufferings of the cross. . . .

Gaze upon Him,
consider Him,
contemplate Him,
as you desire to imitate Him.

If you suffer with Him,
you shall reign with Him,
if you weep with Him,
you shall rejoice with Him;
if you die with Him on the cross of tribulation,
you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendor of the saints
and, in the Book of Life,
your name shall be called glorious among humankind.
Because of this you shall share always and forever
the glory of the kingdom of heaven in place of earthly and passing things,
and everlasting treasures instead of those that perish, and you shall live forever.

Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) was born in Assisi, Italy and was an early follower of Francis of Assisi. Following the reforms begun by Francis, she founded the monastic order that would become known as the Order of Saint Clare, commonly called the Poor Clares.

Day 47

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2019

John 20:1-18

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. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

NOTES:

With the drawing of this Love and
the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot
“Little Gidding”

