

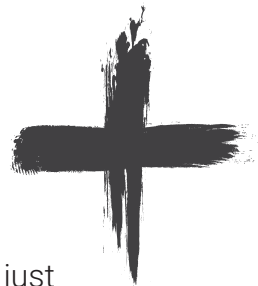


Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

LENTEN

MEDITATIONS

2021



Dear Friend in Christ,

On Ash Wednesday (February 26) 2020, the world was only just becoming aware that a new virus was quickly spreading from country to country. With everything that happened during the forty days of Lent 2020, many of us barely had time to comprehend all that had changed, let alone mourn all that we had lost.

No one in Episcopal Relief & Development's circle is untouched by loss during the COVID-19 pandemic—whether it is staff, partners, donors or program participants. Of course, the greatest measure of loss is the number of deaths in our communities – here in the US and around the world. Our hearts break for all of the people who are no longer with us.

There were other losses as well: jobs and livelihoods; the opportunity to travel to visit loved ones; we even lost the ability to worship together in our church buildings. So much was lost, with little or no time to lament that which was lost.

Because of the magnitude of our collective losses, we decided to focus on lament as the theme for the *2021 Lenten Meditations*. In fact, writing openly about lament is difficult. Especially when so many of us have lost so much. One might ask, "Why should I appear mournful when others have lost so much as well?"

This Lent, we invite you to take some time to lament that which you and others have lost.

In her essay, "Four Steps of Lament," Heidi Weaver invites us to:

- Rest, to take sabbath time to simply be present to our current situation;
- Reflect on that which has been lost;
- Repent for the sufferings and loss we have caused or overlooked; and

- make Restitution and be Restored to God and to one another.

This year for our *Lenten Meditations* we have invited ten writers to share reflections on each of these four steps of lament. These writers are all leaders in The Episcopal Church and represent a diversity of perspectives, ministries and backgrounds.

As a result, we are blessed to have a unique and rich tapestry of viewpoints on the universal experience of lament, loss and new life. Many of the authors share deeply personal and painful experiences related to a variety of issues including disease, violence, racial injustice and poverty. I am profoundly grateful to each of them for their generosity in sharing their pain and journey of lament and to Dr. Sandra Montes for editing this edition.

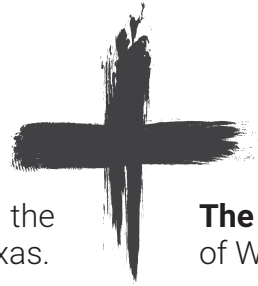
I invite you, our readers, to come to these meditations with an open heart. What you read may challenge you and give rise to unexpected or uncomfortable feelings. We encourage you to engage the "Four Steps of Lament," by resting, reflecting, repenting and ultimately being restored to God and to one another.

Finally our wish for you is that God brings you rest this Lent so that you may reflect on your own loss and be transformed in the process. May God then restore your soul and bring you into the bright new life that is our Easter promise. And may you continue to know that you are loved now and always.

Amen.

Robert W. Radtke
President & CEO
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Please note: During Lent, each Sunday provides a sabbath from Lenten fasts, and we do not publish meditations on Sundays. As each Sunday is a “little Easter,” we invite you to reflect on Christ’s life-giving love on these days.

We extend our gratitude to editor Dr. Sandra T. Montes.

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Ash Wednesday, February 17

That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, as well as their supervisors, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.' Let heavier work be laid on them; then they will labor at it and pay no attention to deceptive words."

—Exodus 5:6-9

Rest is the first phase of lament. Until we step back from the demands of our daily routine to rest and reflect, it is challenging to process difficult events. We struggle to find meaning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic a year after it began. Some individuals had the option of working from home. However, not everyone was afforded this luxury. Plenty of people traveled to work, including first responders and medical personnel, grocery store stockers and gas station clerks. The demands placed upon these essential workers increased during the pandemic. Like the Israelites who labored as enslaved persons during Pharaoh's reign, our essential workers had to do more with less. They were required to make bricks without straw.

What does lament look like when you are too exhausted to rest? How can those who enjoy the privilege of determining our work conditions support our neighbors who have few options? Prayer is certainly part of this equation, and yet our baptismal covenant calls us to do much more than pray. During Lent, commit to a weekly act of kindness for essential workers in your community.

—Phoebe Roaf

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

—2 Corinthians 12:9

Our world was turned upside down when our eight-year-old daughter was diagnosed with leukemia. The next day we were in the hospital for treatment.

She was scared, and in so much pain, I had to help her use the bedside commode. Afterward, she asked with tears in her eyes, "How am I going to do this?" I was at a loss for words. My mind was racing, thinking about years of treatment, medications and hospital visits, and filled with overwhelming fear for my daughter.

I said a quick prayer, and a song came to my mind. It was the old Patsy Cline country-gospel version of "One Day at a Time." I always made fun of Patsy Cline's singing but had not thought of it in thirty years. I told my daughter, "We'll get through this one day at a time." That calmed her, and it also calmed me. It seemed to slow things down. "One day at a time" became the theme for her as we all focused on beating the cancer day by day, not getting ahead of ourselves because that would be too much.

We found rest and renewal in God's grace as his grace proved to be sufficient.

—Willie Bennett



The quest is nurture. It is humility. It is not a test of how strong and brave a person can be, but rather, how vulnerable she or he can be.

—Steven Charleston
The Four Vision Quests of Jesus

Resting can mean a time of relaxing or a time of quiet for metamorphosis, quiet to hear the still small voice of God, quiet to allow the Holy Spirit in, quiet to allow for transformation. In my Lakota culture and others, when we need guidance, right-relationship and to lament, we *Hanbleciya* (cry for a vision). Traditionally, we would go “sit on the hill” by ourselves, fasting and praying. It is a time for reflection, vulnerability and finding our way back into right-relationship with the Creator, with creation and with ourselves.

In the past year, we have all experienced grief, loss and pain. We are left questioning many things. For some, that has included our faith and our God. Yet sometimes in our deepest sorrow, in what we think is our lowest point, in that messy, ugly-crying space, the Holy Spirit can transform us. This is the time to cry for a vision. This is the time to fast, pray and find our way back into right-relationship. This is the time to listen for God and be transformed.

It is difficult to hear God when I’m too busy to pray or think. If my mind is occupied with Facebook or Twitter and my heart with fear or anxiety, where is the room for God’s love, messages and gifts to fit? Your prayer space need not be a church or a quiet place. I often feel God’s presence and voice while listening to music or going for a walk. While God can speak to us anywhere, think about creating time and space to hear her.

—Isaiah “Shaneequa” Brokenleg

I find rest in God.

—Paraphrase of Psalm 62:1

When I was a teacher, I used to tell everyone that Saturday was my day to sleep late. Every other day, I had to wake up before 7 a.m. So, on Saturdays, I would make sure my room was super dark, and my son knew not to wake me up unless there was an emergency.

I wish I could still do that. I wish I could go into my room, make everything dark, turn everything off and rest. But, probably like many of you, I can’t. Not now. Not during the pandemic. Not with the weight of survival on my back. Not with video after video of my murdered siblings. Not with my brown son driving without me. Not with yet another trailblazer passing on.

These days, as the whole country seems dark with killings, continuing deaths from the pandemic and never-ending racial injustice and fear, I do believe there is a spark waiting to get my fire going. I do believe that spark is God. And, I do believe God continues to help me rest even when my whole body is on alert.

—Sandra T. Montes



They stood still, looking sad.

—Luke 24:17b

Growing up in South India, I noticed how hard some communities worked and how invisible they still were. One such was a subset of the Dalits—formerly known as “untouchables”—often referred to as *Safai Karmachari*, a community of manual scavengers. They cleaned latrines in cities and rural communities. For my doctoral research, I interviewed Ramakka on August 9, 2002. She was fifty-two and had been a manual scavenger since she was fifteen. It was disgusting work—cleaning other people’s excreta, collecting them in baskets and carrying these loads on her head—work she had done since her childhood days.

I used to think that rest was about the restoration of lost strength. For millions of people around the world, like Ramakka, rest is a restoration of lost dignity. That realization is their rest, their pause and their inner hope. Luke tells us of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, troubled by the execution of Jesus. They stood still, looking sad when the risen Christ intervened. They paused to assess their sorrow and were clearly irritated by the stranger. Yet this story reminds us that a curious stranger noticing and asking a question can help to initiate rest amid the normalized malaise of dehumanization.

During the pandemic’s imposed pause on our lives, we noticed a few things: that the coronavirus impacts Latino, Black and Native communities disproportionately; that we have treated African Americans as less than human; and that the earth rested. Out of our rest, stillness and lament, will we rise as a gentler and more just humankind?

—Prince Singh

***O GOD OF GRACE AND GLORY,
we remember before you this day all
those who have died in the past year.
We thank you for giving them to us,
their family and friends, to know
and to love as companions on our
earthly pilgrimage. In your boundless
compassion, console us who mourn.
Give us faith to see in death the gate of
eternal life, so that in quiet confidence
we may continue our course on earth,
until, by your call, we are reunited with
those who have gone before; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 493



***And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.
—Mark 6:32***

Taking pause in our spiritual journey is life-giving. Jesus understands this need for a pause in our lives to move us into a time of rest and meditation. Jesus shows us in Matthew how we may reflect, pray and draw strength from the One who is all-knowing and all-powerful in the way of the cross. Jesus goes to God for divine strength in his sacred heart, that special quiet place where he and God meet intimately. Jesus, in his knowing, takes his disciples to a deserted place by themselves to rest for a little while, where God might enter through their powerlessness and renew them with God's strength.

My experience of rest has been in the outdoors, listening among the trees, plants and waters. I seek strength from God in these moments of rest. I experience my powerlessness. I am shown humility. When our bodies are exhausted from the stresses of life's terms, the Divine Spirit reminds us that we, too, need to take pause in our spiritual journey to divert to a lonely place and rest. Jesus is eternally present, ready to hear and listen to our sacred hearts comforted by words of harmony, *Hozhó—Peace be with you.*

—Cornelia Eaton

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.

—Matthew 14:13a

In late summer, my husband and I went hiking in Harriman State Park in New York. It was a brief escape from New York City after many months of being trapped in our one-bedroom apartment as a result of COVID-19. Within ten minutes of walking in the woods, my cell phone service went out, and I suddenly realized I was more disconnected from the outside world than I had been in months. No more texts; no more news alerts; no more emails. For a full hour, it was just footsteps in the woods until we arrived at a clear blue lake.

When Jesus heard of John the Baptist's violent and unjust death at the hands of Herod, his response was to withdraw in a boat to a deserted place by himself. I find comfort in the fact that even Jesus had to step away to take in the full scope of John's tragic death and all that it might mean.

On that lakeside, sitting in the shade of a tall pine tree, I thought about the violence and tragedy that we had briefly left behind: the morgue trucks outside the hospitals; the sudden increase in desperation and homelessness in our neighborhood; and murderous police brutality. It was a moment of holy respite that allowed us to return and recommit to building a more just future.

—Miguel Angel Escobar

**Thursday
February 25**



**Friday
February 26**

*For God alone my soul in silence waits;
from him comes my salvation.*

—Psalm 62:1

When I was a little girl, there were very few moments of silence around me. In our Dominican and Haitian household, space was always filled with loud conversations, church services, colorful music and the sounds of moto-taxis passing by. Now fast-forward to 2021: silence, unrest and uncertainty surround me. So, I cry out; I cry out to the Lord in despair, pleading that neither the silent pandemic nor the loud and unjustified hatred towards my people ends up hurting or taking away those I love the most.

Yet, during these trying times, I find myself needing to use that same silence to recharge, to pause and to actively figure out the best way to heal from all this hurt and uncertainty. And although it's challenging to live with the fear of loss, I faithfully wait for God's promise of salvation, but I no longer wait alone. I've found a community of loving, resilient and dedicated people who have shown me that united in bonds of love, we will continue to walk forward together.

—Sandy Milien

*You will not let my eyelids close;
I am troubled and I cannot speak.*

—Psalm 77:4

Nothing may be one of the best things you can do. One day every week. Do nothing.
—greensabbathproject.net

In a class on practicing a green sabbath (a sabbath that reduces our carbon emissions), my classmate pondered, "How can I take rest when there are those who cannot?" I pondered in return, "How can we not take rest? We need the energy for others." We agreed with each other: we cannot take our rest for granted.

Throughout this harrowing pandemic, my colleagues and I led virtual trainings about maintaining personal resilience in a time of disaster. Often these trainings come at the invitation of a bishop who is trying to get staff and clergy to rest. In the training, we talk about the consequences of not resting; we can lose our minds, our faith or even our lives. While the option to rest is a privilege, if we give this one up, there can be serious consequences.

This past summer I had a lot of guilt about not going into the streets to protest racial injustice. But the truth is I am tired. I am weary because of the compounding harm of multiple traumas from pandemic to racial injustice. Therefore, I had to prioritize my health. So, I got into a car with my good friend for a day trip to my spiritual home, Nelson Pond in New Hampshire. As I sat on the familiar rock, breathing fresh air, the rejuvenating spirit of God blessed me. I looked around and reconnected with God's creation, and indeed, it is very good.

In what way are you able to rejuvenate your spirit today?

—Tamara Plummer



*I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep;
for only you, LORD, make me dwell in safety.*

—Psalm 4:8

It may seem out of place to be talking about rest. We live in troubled and hurried times. Everyone has been forced to change their routine. The number of people suffering from sleep disorders and insomnia is on the rise; others can sleep, but their minds find no rest. Yet resting is vital for our physical, mental and spiritual health. Spiritual health requires spending quality time resting and meditating.

Let's go back to the ninth century BCE. In the midst of a crisis, King David expressed his total trust in God. At the time, he felt unjustly persecuted and slandered, so he cried out with hope that God would intervene. In response, he received peace "that surpasses all understanding." This made him forget his life's tragedies. He slept in divine calm—a peace that no commotion could interrupt.

Today I'm inviting you to offer your thoughts to God and to rest in God so that you may receive that same peace in your body, mind and spirit. "For only you, Lord, make me dwell in safety." All those who put their faith and hope in God will dwell in safety!

—Patricia Martin

***ETERNAL GOD,
in whose perfect kingdom
no sword is drawn
but the sword of righteousness,
no strength known
but the strength of love:
So mightily spread abroad your Spirit,
that all peoples may be gathered
under the banner of the Prince of Peace,
as children of one Father;
to whom be dominion and glory,
now and for ever. Amen.***

—The Book of Common Prayer, p. 815



Monday, March 1

When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God...But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

—Acts 7:54-60

Acknowledging the enormity of what you have suffered is part of the process of lament. When we name the injuries inflicted upon us, we expose our wounds to God's healing mercies. Remembering is a difficult aspect of lamenting. On the one hand, those who have lost loved ones to senseless violence demand that we remember their names. On the other hand, retelling the story can bring back all of the painful emotions and unresolved grief. There is no simple way to navigate this process.

Holy Scripture does not overlook the details of heinous events, which suggests that there is power in remembering. The ultimate sacrifice was Jesus' death on the cross for the salvation of the world. But Jesus was not the only innocent person killed for their beliefs. The Acts of the Apostles recounts the rage that was triggered when Stephen accused his listeners of contributing to Jesus' death. I can only imagine what Stephen's family felt when they learned of his fate. Families continue to experience shock and pain when a loved one is murdered. Do you have a story of personal loss that you have never shared? Tell your truth to one trusted friend or colleague. There are others who are willing to shoulder this burden with you.

—Phoebe Roaf

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.

—Leviticus 25:38

In Leviticus 25, God calls his people to remember their origin story as slaves brought out of the land of Egypt. However powerful and wealthy they might have become in the centuries since, God insists that the memory of their past as liberated slaves and sojourners in a foreign land should guide how they treat the most vulnerable among them.

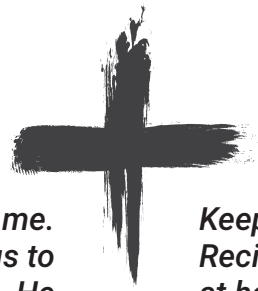
God ascribes a moral weight to memory. Descendants of exploited slaves have a special obligation to treat laborers fairly. Children of refugees must welcome the stranger. Liberated slaves should not make loans that entrap the poor in the slavery of debt.

This is one of the many reasons I am so proud to serve on the board of Episcopal Relief & Development. This ministry helps Episcopalians reconnect with the moral significance of our ancient past and offers all of us ways of living out God's call to care for the most vulnerable in our midst.

What are the stories that help you remember who you are?

—Miguel Angel Escobar

**Wednesday
March 3**



**Thursday
March 4**

The Spirit of God is within me. The Spirit of God walks with me. The Spirit of God teaches me about my faith to trust in Jesus to lead me through grief and darkness. Jesus holds my hand. He leadeth me by faith that lights up my path in the harmony way.

**—God Shil Yi’ash
“He Leadeth Me”
Navajo Hymns of Faith**

This is a familiar hymn to elderly Navajo Christians. I remember while growing up in my faith community among elderly Navajo women, they loved to sing this hymn because it was their faith walk with Jesus. Navajo elders are beloved and known for their strength, hope and resiliency. It is through the example of their faith that we remember to walk in faith with God in Jesus for comfort, assurance, guidance and direction.

I remember the times when I heard the elderly women share about joys and hardships in our language of *Diné*. The word spoken was *indé*—“and yet”—was about hope, faith and trust in the divine guidance. They remembered through their faith, prayers and songs how the Spirit of God taught them to trust in Jesus to lead the way into joy and harmony.

I am reminded at this time in Lent, God in the Spirit walks beside us, teaching us to hope, trust and hold to the faith of Jesus.

—Cornelia Eaton

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away.

—Deuteronomy 6:6-7

I often wonder, are we speaking the truth of our reality? Are we taking advantage of our time together to listen to each other with an open heart? I often wonder.

A while ago, I was with two friends having a conversation about the power that words have to define future generations. As the conversation went on, we started putting together a collage of words we’ve heard our parents say as they’ve shared stories about our ancestors. They are of European descent while I am of African descent, but words such as cruelty, darkness and sacrifice were prevalent for the three of us. After processing the conversation, I realized that I could not forget the roots of my truth, nor let my story be lost. I have to continue to name it, talk about it when I’m at home and when I’m away, with everyone I love and with anyone I encounter. Not only to give importance to the lives of those that came before, but to open the door for new and life-giving conversations that will then create a different collage with words such as love, reconciliation and beloved community.

—Sandy Milien

**Friday
March 5**



**Saturday
March 6**

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

—Luke 23:42

*O you tears, O you tears,
I am thankful that you run.
Though you trickle in the darkness,
You shall glitter in the sun.*

*The rainbow cannot shine if the rain refuse to fall;
And the eyes that cannot weep are the saddest eyes of all.*

**—Charles Mackay
“Tears” (updated)**

One morning when I was a little boy in Chennai, India, the Dhobi brought laundry that had been washed, pressed and neatly wrapped in old newspaper. He sat on the floor as was customary, given the caste hierarchy. I vividly remember my mother insisting that he sit on the chair. She then served him tea and biscuits. Mom was a social worker who pioneered non-formal education among women in the slums of Chennai. She died in January 2020. I have great memories of her kindness and generosity of spirit, but most importantly, I remember her agency to correct wrongs in society. Mom had a rough life with challenges, but she never lost a sense of who she was and the difference she could make as a child of God. Her sufferings helped hone her capacity for empathy as an educator.

Jesus suffered. All of us suffer in small and large ways. Yet some of us become empathetic while others of us become bitter. Jesus modeled how to *re-member* us. We can become agents who help create slivers of paradise here and now.

How can I help re-member my community?

—Prince Singh

Remember

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

—Luke 6:27

My childhood pastor used to tell us, “You gotta love everybody, chil’ren, even white people.”

I’ve often reflected on that statement’s simplicity and complexity in situations where people were hard to love. Surprisingly, the most difficult times weren’t when I first heard the “N” word, or the guy who bullied me (until I had enough) or when someone wronged me. I had the most difficulty loving my enemies when I never met them like the drug dealers down the street that I fought but never knew and those we stereotype so we can more easily label them as racists, liberals, conservatives, black people, white people, criminals and immigrants. Not knowing them makes them faceless and easier to demonize and hate.

But how can we love people we don’t know? How can we say we love everyone but support children of immigrants being separated from their families, scream obscenities at the police officer we’ve never met or get our guns ready because the evil protesters are coming for us? This is fear, not love. We have to do what it takes to know the “other” so that we can love our enemies.

I remember my pastor saying, “You gotta love everybody, chil’ren, even, [insert the group you struggle with].” God give us the strength to know and to love, even our enemies.

—Willie Bennett



You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.

—Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

Lent is a great time to remember. It is a time not only to remember, as crosses are traced on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, that we are dust and to dust we will return, but also to remember the “but God” instances in our lives.

One of my favorite Bible verses is Genesis 50:20, and the New International Version says “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” What have been some of your “but God” moments? Think about some of the moments when everything seemed to be going against you *but God* showed up and, as I like to say, showed off.

I remember applying for three jobs a couple of years ago and feeling defeated when I wasn’t chosen for any of them, but God had an even better position for me. I could write books filled with “but God” moments, large and small, important and insignificant, obvious and subtle. Those are the moments I look back on to help me live through the difficult todays. “But God so loved the world...” the popular verse reminds us.

Will you join me at this moment and breathe and remember every single time God has shown up in big and especially in small ways?

—Sandra T. Montes

***ALMIGHTY GOD, we entrust all
who are dear to us to your
never-failing care and love,
for this life and the life to come,
knowing that you are
doing for them better things
than we can desire or pray for;
through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.***

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 831

**Tuesday
March 9**

**Wednesday
March 10**



"Do this for the remembrance of me."

*Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith: Christ has died.
Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption...

—The Book of Common Prayer, p. 363

Our memories are what keep alive our faith, our culture and our very existence. Sometimes we can remember something so deeply that we make that thing present again. This is called *anamnesis*. Every time we celebrate Eucharist, we make present Christ's death and resurrection. When I was a child, my grandma pointed out the words in the Dakota hymnal as we sang. I stood with her in the kitchen, and she taught me to cook. Today, when I sing from the Dakota hymnal or make a recipe of hers, it's like she is here with me. I hear her singing with me or looking over my shoulder as I cook, telling me to stir my pot.

So many injustices have happened recently that make real and make present events of the past. The government's oppression of the Indigenous folks at Standing Rock makes present the 7th Cavalry's oppression of Indigenous people long ago. George Floyd's cry to his mother during his murder made present Christ's passion and calling to his mother. As we see and feel these injustices, know that our ancestors are made present with us too. Just as the suffering of the crucified Christ is present in the eucharist, the suffering of our ancestors is made present in these times of injustice. Our ancestors stand with us in our grief and pain, calling us to action, calling us to change, calling us to transform our world, making present and real God's kin(g)dom.

—Isaiah "Shaneequa" Brokenleg

She knew if she spoke the truth then the facts would change.

—unknown

When I was a student activities director at the University of Vermont, a graduate assistant I supervised gave me a sign that said, "She knew if she spoke the truth then the facts would change." Now a treasured possession, the sign reminds me to always remember the current truths that have created life-giving and life-limiting realities. The first step in reconciliation work of any kind is to tell the truth. The community gathers to remember the harm done from their perspective. And through deep listening and acknowledgment of harm, we can then build a more just and equitable community.

As we seek reconciliation not only with each other but also with God's creation, we must engage in similar work. I have long admired our Pastors and Disasters Toolkit from Episcopal Relief & Development because it starts with this act of memory. A group of people walk around the community and speak with elders, remembering where disasters have happened in the past. By remembering the truth and acting on it, the fact that monsoons wipe out food supplies changes.

Remembering is a sticky process; it is not reliable. Today we call those who remake truth and purposely misremember, *gaslighters*. The Chicks' album by this title remembers a divorce and the lessons learned by this tragedy. I love the way the song reflects our communal experience of loss through laughter, tears, communal support and a bit of dance.

What hard truths and memories will heal you and your community?

—Tamara Plummer

Thursday
March 11

Repent

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

—John 14:1-3

When we experience loss, it's only natural for our hearts to be troubled. John's record of the words of Jesus includes promises that touch troubled hearts—encouraging words that help us live out and reaffirm our faith and hope in eternal life.

When we are separated from our loved ones and our soul is distressed, we can find peace again if we believe with all confidence that there is room for all believers. "In my Father's house, there are many dwelling places." The image used here is that of a group of travelers: one walks ahead and makes the necessary preparations for the others. And as Jesus prepares a dwelling for each of us, he also prepares us for that dwelling.

We have the certainty that we will meet again. Even though Jesus physically left his disciples, it was only a temporary separation. Jesus is with us always.

Jesus tells his disciples that faith in God will heal their troubled hearts. He tells us the same.

Today, let us move forward, not losing sight of our Savior's cross.

—Patricia Martin



Friday, March 12

Help me, LORD, for there is no godly one left: the faithful have vanished from among us. Everyone speaks falsely with his neighbor; with a smooth tongue they speak from a double heart. Oh, that the LORD would cut off all smooth tongues, and close the lips that utter proud boasts! Those who say, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

—Psalm 12:1-4

One aspect of lament is recognizing that everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Both victim and perpetrator are equal at the foot of the cross. This is a hard truth to acknowledge for those who have been victimized. The goal of repentance is not to blame the victim but rather to accept that brokenness is part of the human condition. The psalmist acknowledges that there are no godly persons left. Perhaps that is why Jesus instructed his disciples to ask for forgiveness and to forgive those who injured them in the Lord's Prayer.

If we desire forgiveness when we have fallen short, we are called to forgive others. Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting the incident or waiving your right to restitution. Neither does it entail allowing yourself to be repeatedly abused. What forgiveness facilitates is a release from the anger and pain so that we can move on with our lives. As part of your healing process, write one thing where forgiveness is called for on a piece of paper. This can be a situation where someone could benefit from your forgiveness or where you need God's forgiveness. Then tear the sheet of paper into tiny pieces or burn it as you pray for the ability to be forgiven and to forgive.

—Phoebe Roaf

**Saturday
March 13**

**Sunday
March 14**



No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

—Proverbs 28:13

See me, love me, recognize my humanity! That is the cry of many people today. It seems we've been crying out for centuries, hoping that the image of God reflected in us be acknowledged and not dismissed.

Concealing and ignoring our transgressions and those of others is what's hurting our society the most. We can't keep pretending that all is well when we have front row seats to a never-ending show of horrific human darkness. It's time to turn to God, to the source of love and mercy, and courageously acknowledge our role in this show.

The work of repentance is a work of courage and transformation that comes from the heart. Repentance means facing our darkness, fighting oppression and injustice in real-time, and boldly rejecting everything that is not of God. I dream of a day when we all decide to turn in the direction of the Gospel of love, a Gospel that is life-giving and where all are truly seen, loved without measure and where the beauty of the image of God is recognized and celebrated in all human beings.

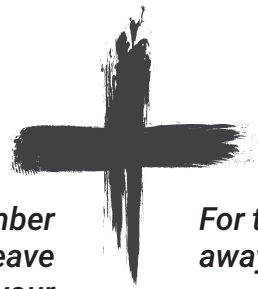
—Sandy Milien

***O merciful Father, who has taught us
in your holy Word that you do not
willingly afflict or grieve our children:
Look with pity upon the sorrows of
all your servants for whom our
prayers are offered.***

***Remember them, O Lord, in mercy,
nourish their soul with patience,
comfort them with a sense of your
goodness, lift up your countenance
upon them, and give them peace;
through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.***

—The Book of Common Prayer, p. 831

**Monday
March 15**



**Tuesday
March 16**

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

—Matthew 5:23-24

As we ready for the journey in Christ in the way of the cross, we are moving in the Spirit of God toward the gift of divine luminosity.

Making amends and forgiveness is not easy. Sometimes these two actions take time, yet with courage, we move toward reconciliation a step at a time. We are like mosaic pieces. We have imperfections. These imperfections guide us to see deep within ourselves in order to make amends and change where it is needed. We learn how to fit our mosaic pieces in the image of the cross where we are made right with God, ourselves and with those with whom we make amends and forgive. This takes vulnerability and bravery, and these two things created in the image of God are very good and beautiful. The paradox of divine spirituality brings us together. God's light enters and shines to help us live in wholeness in Christ.

May your Lenten journey be a peace offering in the light of the divine healer. *Amen.*

—Cornelia Eaton

For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.

—2 Chronicles 30:9b

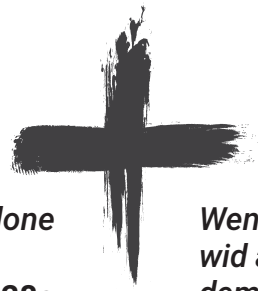
During the reign of Hezekiah, the Feast of the Passover was only one of three feasts that required a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem each year. "Come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God," Hezekiah invited (verse 8). As in that day, God's grace and forgiveness are available today to all who return to God.

According to the Law of Moses, God will be compassionate and merciful to those who truly repent (Leviticus 26:40-42). The same invitation is in force today. No matter what our situation may be, we can turn our face to God. Our mistakes are not that different from those of people in biblical times, and we can see how God showed compassion and mercy toward them.

This is the season to turn to God and invite God's peace and the fruits of the Spirit into our lives. God will never turn away from us if we return to God. These promises are based on an eternal principle regarding God's nature: God promises to draw near to those who draw near to him.

—Patricia Martin

**Wednesday
March 17**



**Thursday
March 18**

Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

—Matthew 15:28a

Jesus usually shows us how to be, how to think and how to act. However, in this encounter with the Canaanite woman, he models how to learn from a foreign woman from across the border. The teacher learns, unlearns and repents.

Power is a real thing. Jesus was a powerful man in this Jewish context. He was, however, blind to his power and blinded by his perspective of having a clear 20/20 vision of the purpose and strategy of God's plan. Any ideology of superiority has a built-in assumption of surety that over time can become arrogant and normative. The American "caste" system is a thing but only when seen in interaction with those who are from the subordinate "castes." Only interaction with those who are different from us can help us correct dominant ways of being and living.

Jesus, in this encounter, learns the truth of the Beatitudes he preached. He found out that the poor will inherit the earth when they are not silenced and ignored by theologies and ideologies of Empire. Repentance is about recognizing and turning away from not so life-giving ways. Amendment of life is an inner thing that happens quietly without statements but with an affinity for a change of heart and path. Repentance heals the world from the sin of caste where all gifts, the root of asset-based community development, are welcomed and celebrated. God have mercy!

—Prince Singh

Wen Jiizas si ar a ala an a baal, an si di Juu dem we did kom wid ar a baal tu, im aat muuv. "Wich paat unu put im?" Jiizas aks dem. "Kom, Laad, kom an si," dem se tu im. Jiizas baal.

—John 11:33-35

Di Jameikan Nuu Testament

In this passage, Jesus is mourning the loss of a friend. But his heart is moved by the mourning of the community. In Jamaican culture, to *baal* is a full physical expression of one's pain. It is not merely water falling from one's eyes. We've experienced much loss through our harmful words, institutional violence and global pandemic. At times, harm has been up close and personal. The loss of a childhood friend moved me differently than the statistics.

In 2020, we were locked inside and could not turn our faces from communal grief. So many in the church wondered: how might we, like Jesus, mourn what is lost *and* make conditions for resurrection to happen? Once the full expression of pain is experienced, Jesus rolls up his sleeves and invites the crowd to get to work, removing the stone and bandages of death.

Repentance is not just the act of saying, "I am sorry," but an opportunity to speak the truth so that the facts might change. It is about doing the work, going beyond the mere catchphrase. The work isn't just about large public gestures of repentance. It is also about how you see your fellow-creature (human and otherwise). Doing the work is showing up and seeing the belovedness in every being, allowing your heart to be so moved by their grief that the resurrecting love of Christ is the central energetic force that propels you to move through the world *baaling*.

—Tamara Plummer

**Friday
March 19**



**Saturday
March 20**

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

—Ephesians 4:26

My daughter came home from kindergarten one day crying because she wasn't white. She had picked up that white is better. "Why can't I be white?"

This brought back memories of my childhood growing up in the first integrated class in my school, and it made me angry. I was angry that I couldn't protect my daughters from a culture where Black is perceived as bad. But mostly I was angry because no matter what I did, I could never give my daughters the opportunities and wealth that their white counterparts receive simply because of history. Society would penalize and blame them for the disparity. As Marvin Gaye said, the situation "makes me wanna holler and throw up my hands" in defeat and frustration. I wanted to just give in to anger and vent on the world. But I had to stop. The still small voice in my spirit reminded me that being angry was ok, but how was I using it?

When it comes to race, how many times have we given up, stopped trying or refused to forgive? In this season of Lent, let us repent of anger that leads to hate, stereotyping and social or relational laziness. Let us embrace an anger that leads to justice, radical engagement and truth-telling inside a fierce relationality. We can't give up on each other because Christ did not give up on us.

—Willie Bennett

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Matthew 18:20

Where Jesus is, there is love. When Jesus is present, all ills of society are addressed, challenged, corrected and healed. Rochester, New York, was one of many cities impacted by the inhumane death of Black people. Daniel Prude was a Black man who was also mentally ill. Mental health has been neglected in our communities overall, and we are all participants in that neglect. The unjust way he died has exposed, yet again, the moral health pandemic of a "caste system" in the United States and around the world. Unless we address this moral health crisis, we will come back to some manifestation of the same problem again and again.

Episcopal Relief & Development has consistently worked with partners around the world to reach the most vulnerable—those struggling with poverty, hunger and disease. Beyond policy and systemic changes, we get through these difficult circumstances because someone stands with us. Jesus needs his body to stand with the vulnerable and the invisible peoples of our world. Standing with those who suffer to correct the wrongs of history is practicing the presence of Jesus. We can each do our part of loving and healing by expanding our circles!

—Prince Singh



***Now there is rejoicing in heaven;
for you were lost, and are found;
you were dead, and are now alive
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Abide in peace. The Lord has
put away all your sins.
Thanks be to God.***

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 451

What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord GOD of hosts.

—Isaiah 3:15

As part of an effort to help New York’s significant homeless population self-isolate amidst the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, homeless families with children were moved from overcrowded shelters into hotels across New York City. I happen to live by one such hotel and was not prepared for many of my neighbors’ responses.

Instead of compassion for some of the most vulnerable members of society, several of my neighbors reverted to fear, anger and self-protection. People publicly complained that they didn’t pay such high rents to be living beside the homeless. Others took the more subtle position of wishing this laudable solution wasn’t happening right next door. Then there were those of us—myself included—who should have advocated more forcefully in the name of compassion and basic human decency.

During confession, we ask God forgiveness for those things done and left undone. These days, I’m struck by how often it is the most vulnerable who are the victims of our statements and silence, our actions and inaction. In the Book of Isaiah, God asks, “What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?” What do we mean by this indeed? How can we turn from such actions toward a different way of being?

—Miguel Angel Escobar

Tuesday
March 23



Restitution & Restoration

*We confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 360

I'm often asked how people, particularly people in The Episcopal Church, can become advocates for diversity and can be anti-racists. I tell them that the first step I had to take was to look deep inside, in those places so hidden that even I had a tough time finding them. Then, I had to face all the things that I knew I had thought, done, left undone, said that were not loving, not uplifting and not edifying to my siblings who may not be part of my culture. After that, I had to repent. I had to truly come to the feet of Jesus and ask for forgiveness. I have to actively and intentionally repent daily because I mess up, or sin, all the time.

In our *Book of Common Prayer*, we have the Confession, and it can be a starting point for us to repent. Without my daily recognition of wrongdoing and the certainty that God loves and forgives me, I wouldn't be able to be true to my Baptismal Covenant of striving for justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of every human being.

—Sandra T. Montes

Wednesday, March 24

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

—**Micah 6:6-8**

When the process of lamenting is over, what is next? What are God's expectations for those who have been injured and for those who have hurt others? What is necessary for reconciliation? It comes down to this for the prophet Micah: that all of us do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with God. Accomplishing these three goals is the work of a lifetime. Sometimes, those who have been injured erect barriers to protect their hearts. When that happens, bitterness can replace kindness. Perhaps that is why the prophet reminds us of the need for humility, lest those who have been offended end up hurting other people.

When God's justice is enacted, our communities will be places where everyone can thrive. In the kingdom of God, no one is exempt from the responsibility to demonstrate kindness and humility. Faithful disciples are called to eradicate injustice wherever they find it. Ultimately, talk is cheap. Our actions demonstrate what we value far more than our words. A Lenten discipline's goal is to establish patterns that will continue beyond the forty days of Lent. As we prepare for Holy Week and Easter, identify one cause you are passionate about and volunteer your time, talents or treasure in a spirit of humility and kindness.

—Phoebe Roaf

**Thursday
March 25**

**Friday
March 26**



So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

—Galatians 6:9

Only by persevering in doing what is right will we be led to the reward we were promised.

How can I “do what is right” to someone who is lying and doing me harm? God is wiser than I. God says that the best thing to do is forgive—not to hold grudges or resentment but to love my neighbor and always do what is right. So that is what I will do, and I invite you to join me. I know how challenging this sounds, but today we are deciding to place God above everything else.

We are learning how to live beneath the cross and to persevere. All that we sow, we will reap. Let us wait with faith and never lose heart as we continue doing what is right. The outside world may rage against us. Have faith. Do what is right.

There is one more thing I invite you to do: Ask God in prayer to fill your heart with love, justice and forgiveness. Try to do God’s will. Try to always be connected to God, even if a part of you doesn’t want to. Doing what is right is more challenging than following our own wishes. You will need faith and resolve to want to please the Lord. Let’s keep on walking, one step at a time.

—Patricia Martin

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and did not conceal my guilt;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.”
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.*

—Psalm 32:5-6

I recently listened to a podcast about apologies. The speaker talked about the fact that saying “I’m sorry” isn’t about erasing the guilt of your sin. It is rather an opportunity to acknowledge the harm you have caused. The role of the harmed isn’t to absolve you of your harm. They get to decide when they are ready to forgive you. They get to decide if, how, and in what manner they would like to be in relationship with you.

The act of absolution comes from my relationship with God. It is only when I remember my belovedness and God’s grace that true restitution will come. This does not mean that I am absolved of the responsibility for the harm I have done. It also doesn’t mean that I am released from the harm done on my behalf.

Particularly in this time of pandemic, economic crisis and racial reckoning, we are invited to think about our interpersonal, everyday relationships and our larger social structures that have created inequity and injustice. What I have learned most from my work in disasters is that various groups are disproportionately impacted by harm in our world. And we learn that we might already have some solutions for these inequities. We have seen our communities step up to address homelessness, food insecurity and health inequities during this pandemic. What are we called to do in non-disaster times to make this world look more like God’s dream?

—Tamara Plummer



Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD.

—Isaiah 1:18a

One of the defining moments of my life was the fight that closed down a crack house behind the community center where I worked. The community won a \$1 million grant, and neighborhood leaders were excited about the possibilities for change. Then disappointment came when most of the money went to agencies located outside of the neighborhood. That experience remains with me and informs my current work of focusing on congregational/community engagement and transformation.

How do well-meaning people with resources and power faithfully engage neglected communities without running over the people who actually live there? I believe it begins with conversation and a commitment to local residents being the decision-makers. This recognition of the strength and sustainability found in local resources is at the heart of asset-based community development.

I've worked with congregations and communities where deep and lasting change has happened. It requires humility and a true commitment to reconciliation. We cannot turn around decades of neighborhood neglect and broken promises without first creating trust. Like God has done, we must seek out the "other" and recognize their full capacity as people created in God's image. It will take many conversations, time and, yes, arguments to build the trust needed for real change. Yet, some of the most lasting and gratifying work I've experienced came from hard conversations with residents committed to their community. I believe people of faith can lead the pathway forward by humbly engaging in authentic conversation and relationships with the people in the communities we serve. This begins one conversation at a time.

—Willie Bennett

A Prayer for Episcopal Relief & Development

***LOVING AND MERCIFUL GOD,
you bestow your grace on all of your children:
Remember our sisters and brothers
here and throughout the world who,
in partnership with
Episcopal Relief & Development,
strengthen communities,
empower those in poverty,
nourish those who are hungry,
heal those who are sick
and uplift those affected by disaster;
so that your Kingdom
might be known to all people;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.***

**Monday
March 29**

“It is in community that we can discover God most profoundly, even when community is a headache, which it often can be, but the truth is that we actually need each other. We are at our best when we come together.”

—Presiding Bishop Michael Bruce Curry

Nicholas Black Elk, a Medicine Man, Christian and Prophet, had a vision in which he saw a time of transformation and a time of togetherness. In his vision, he saw hoops of each nation, Tribe, and people, dancing together as one large hoop around the healing tree—or tree of life. Black Elk’s vision reminds us that we are called to live in right-relationship to one another.

In times of great destruction and sorrow, we remember our prophets. We come back to our sacred traditions. We are called back to that deep relationship we need to have with one another, recognizing one another as relatives, as sacred and as beloved.

Repentance, like love, is an action word. It is not meant to be something we simply say. It is meant to be something that we do, that we live, that we embody. That lived, embodied action of being a good relative, that journey toward right-relationship, is recompense. Ask yourself, “What kind of relative am I called to be?” Then live your life, journeying toward being that kind of relative—and not just to those we see as we go about our lives but also to those relatives who live, talk, think, vote, pray and love differently than we do.

—Isaiah “Shaneequa” Brokenleg



**Tuesday
March 30**

I had reasoned this out in my mind; there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other.

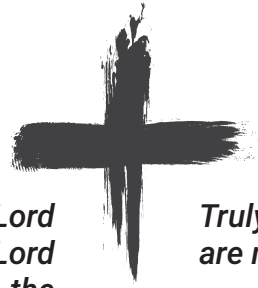
**—Harriet Tubman to Sarah Bradford
*Harriet, The Moses of Her People***

How can we make right what we have participated in making wrong? How can we make amends for being participants in causing loss and suffering? How can we commit to rebuilding what we have contributed to demolishing? How can we get out of the way so those who have always been in the background, behind us, can take the lead? How can we soften our hearts to realize if one of us is not thriving, none of us are? We don’t have to figure this out on our own nor do we have to do it alone. As Christians, we have the example of Jesus and saints like Monseñor Oscar Romero and Harriet Tubman to guide us and encourage us.

Jesus, in the Bible stories, was always healing or listening or giving words of encouragement and peace. He built people up and commanded them to love God, love themselves and love others. Monseñor Romero, who also gave his life for the people, spoke with authenticity and conviction; he expressed himself honestly about the realities he not only preached about but lived. Harriet Tubman’s life shows us that, when we reach freedom, we must help others reach that freedom because there is enough of it for all of us.

—Sandra T. Montes

**Wednesday
March 31**



**Maundy Thursday
April 1**

Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ.

—Colossians 3:23-24

During my time in college, I worked at the University Children Center. One child filled my heart with joy because she was always so kind and attentive to her classmates. During clean up time at the end of the day, she would always rush to clean her space to have the time to help her friends. Then, she would run up to me and ask, "What else can I do, Ms. Sandy?" And as I now read the news and scroll through videos on social media, I wonder why aren't those that can, and should, running to ask what they can do to help clean up the stains of oppression and ignorance that are getting harder and harder to remove from the fabric of our society?

We should aspire to be like this child, who saw a need and was eager to do more out of love, not wait or want anything in return. Just the joy of being a source of kindness was enough for her. There is a lot of need around us, and we are called to put ourselves into the task of fulfilling God's dream on earth with determination, excitement and in community.

—Sandy Milien

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

—Matthew 25:40

In the fourth century, John Chrysostom preached an extraordinary homily connecting the worship of Christ's body in the eucharist to the care and concern we extend to "the least of these" in society. In his homily, he was invoking what he considered "the sweetest passage" of Matthew 25:40, a passage that is the mandate of Episcopal Relief & Development. There Jesus states, "Truly, I tell you just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Chrysostom's homily calls out Christian hypocrisy. Standing beneath the gilded dome of Antioch's Great Church, in a sanctuary filled with polished marble, brass, gold and precious stones, he asked: "For what is the profit when his table is full of golden cups but he perishes with hunger? First, fill him and then deck out his table also. Why offer him a cup of gold while denying him a cup of cold water? Would you furnish his table with cloths of gold, while to himself, you afford not even a basic covering?"

This is an invitation for Christians to reevaluate our priorities. Chrysostom believed that profound worship occurs when we see Christ in the "least of these" and feed the hungry, give a cup of water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger and visit prisoners. Worship and care for the most vulnerable are profoundly linked. Let us recommit to living this out every day.

—Miguel Angel Escobar



Therefore, my friends... we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh).

—Hebrews 10:19-20

The youth group at Iglesia San Andrés in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) was going to reenact the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the congregation was about to move from the chapel to the auditorium. I was a 3-year-old girl, holding my mother's hand, when all of a sudden I found myself face-to-face with that man covered in "blood," crowned with "thorns," carrying a cross so heavy that it bent his body forward. His face was in my line of sight.

My mother moved me to the side so that Jesus could lead the procession, but I burst into tears and shouted, "No, Mommy, no!" My mother explained that it was just a play, and we entered the auditorium to see the rest of the Passion. I calmed down in her arms until the moment when the same man was being "nailed" to the cross. My mother had to take me out of the room before the end. I could not understand that it was a reenactment of a true story—it seemed all too real to me. Every year on Good Friday, I remember that man who looked at me tenderly in the midst of his agony. That is the day when I began my story with the real Jesus.

I invite you to think of moments that highlight your own story with the Savior. In the midst of pain, joy, daily struggles and uncertainties, can you recognize him next to you? This is a good time for us to consider how to respond to the greatest act of love ever carried out for humankind and for you. It's true—you and Jesus have a story together.

—Patricia Martin

In beauty may I walk, all day long may I walk. Through returning seasons may I walk. On the trail marked with pollen may I walk. With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk. With dew about my feet may I walk. With beauty may I walk. With beauty before me, may I walk. With beauty behind me, may I walk. With beauty above me, may I walk. With beauty below me, may I walk. With beauty all around me, may I walk. In old age wandering on a trail of beauty may I walk, lively, may I walk. It is finished in beauty. It is finished in beauty.

**—Walk in Beauty, closing prayer from
the Navajo Blessing Way Ceremony**

Listen to the voice of Divine Creator on the walk. Imagine your walk in these words. Where do you feel humility and peace? Where on this spiritual walk in the beauty way do you see beauty?

The Navajo beauty prayer takes us on a journey in seasons of life. Each pause, each step is a prayer. Every new step is a beginning as the Holy Spirit prays with us. The Navajo prayer invites us into ceremony with the Divine to restore our holistic self with creation. On the trail of the beauty prayer, we are invited to listen carefully to places where we need healing. We listen, we pray and we bless our sacred being with the healing medicines of Mother Earth's nutrients. This, too, is ceremony where God loves us as we are. God's divine creation knows us, too, and shows us how God's transforming power restores our very soul. It is how God makes us whole.

—Cornelia Eaton

Easter April 4



Rest
Remember
Repent
Restitution and Restoration

All of these are acts of Love. Our love for God and God's love for us made real in the example of God's risen son, Jesus.

Rest: When God charged Moses with delivering his people out of bondage in Egypt; when God, out of love, called his children to new life, he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Exodus 33:14). We are given rest from slavery, rest from oppression, and rest in the love that is God—our creator and our deliverer.

Remember: "...I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:15-16). To remember is a blessing. Blessed memory moves us from sorrow to gratitude, and that gratitude is an active sign of God's love in our lives.

Repent: "For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15). Many things can distract us from the love of God, but when we remember God's love for us, that love can change the path we are on, and that love shall be our strength.

Restitution and Restoration: Peter denied Jesus three times, and three times Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, Son of John, do you love me?" Peter's greatest gift was his love for Jesus, and his denial of Jesus slowly hid that gift. Peter responded, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (John 21:17). Jesus responded to the now-restored Peter, "Feed my sheep."

On this holy day of Easter, after a season of resting, remembering and repenting, God's love restores us and commands us to go and share that love to restore all of creation in that powerful, life-giving love. Restored by God's love, let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the loving power of the Spirit. Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

—Michael Bruce Curry

***O God, who for our redemption
gave your only-begotten
Son to the death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
delivered us from
the power of our enemy:
Grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live
with him in the joy of
his resurrection; through
Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and for ever. Amen.***

—The Book of Common Prayer, p. 222

MY LENTEN RESPONSE



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