



# St. Anthony Park United Methodist Church



*Open Minds.  
Open Hearts.  
Open Doors.*

## Devotional Reflections on Lent

from the Congregation of  
St. Anthony Park United Methodist Church

We hope you enjoy this collection of inspired and inspiring reflections for the season of Lent. Each of the forty days during the Lenten season features a story, poem, hymn or other creative contribution from one of our members.

Grateful thanks to those who have contributed to this booklet. We dedicate it to all of you who enrich and inspire our spiritual lives.

We wish all of you blessings as we enter the Lenten season. May you encounter your own reflections and memories of this season as you read these pages.

For the 2010 Lenten Season  
February 17 - Ash Wednesday to  
April 4 - Easter Sunday

## Day 1 of Lent - February 17

### Ash Wednesday

# My Light

*Devotion contributed by: Marie Abraham*

I was sitting in my LazyBoy recliner reading, when the light suddenly went out; leaving me in darkness. I needed to get a new bulb. I sat thinking what a dark world this would be if we didn't have God's light to direct our daily paths.

The Bible says, "*God is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear.*" His light will shine forever. Thanks be to God!

## Day 2 of Lent - February 18

# I Was There

*Devotion contributed by: Karen Ballen*

*"Do not be afraid, for I am with you."*

Genesis 26:24

Some of you know that I write about science for children. One article that I wrote a few years ago really touched me. During World War II, two Polish doctors risked their lives and those of their families to create a fake typhus epidemic in their villages. The Nazis, afraid of an epidemic that would sweep through their army and possibly cost them the war, avoided those villages, sparing the residents the horrors of Nazi occupation. While researching the article, I read about the merciless persecution of people on the basis of their religious beliefs or their nationality that occurred in Europe at that time. I sat crying on the couch one night, thinking "How could people do this to each other? Where was God?" While I don't usually feel that I have a very close connection to God, this time the answer came to me right away: "I was there – in the hearts and hands of those doctors who were saving their neighbors – and in many others who were risking everything to protect people they did not even know." Gracious God, remind us of your presence in the worst of human circumstances.



## Day 3 of Lent - February 19

# Jesus Ministry

*Devotion contributed by: Chris Mikesell*

One narrative of Jesus' life often holds my attention. It is the story of the beginning of his ministry as told in Luke 4:14-21.

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.*

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the  
prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Between that time and the Cross, Jesus spent much of his time living that prophecy. Perhaps this is one reason I find it difficult to separate Jesus from social justice issues. For me, belief is not enough, in addition, I must practice what the life of Jesus has shown me.

## Day 4 of Lent - February 20

# Who is God?

*Devotion contributed by: Pre-school Sunday School class: Sam B., Aaron R., Tommy T., Valentina R., Margo C., and Catherine L.*

God is our Father. He is big and tall; good and nice.

He helps us learn and do chores and make friends.

We thank him for food, friends and family. For sisters and brothers, pets and birds and the creatures of the sea.

God is with us when we fall down and get hurt. He is there when we run and laugh. He is there when we do our chores and go to school.

We know God loves every single one of us!

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## First Sunday of Lent - February 21

*Romans 10:8-13 (New International Version)*

*But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

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## Day 5 of Lent - February 22

# Prayer Partner

*Devotion contributed by: Sarah Leach*

Lent is a time of self-reflection and self-denial and for opening ourselves to better hear God's word. My recent participation SAPUMC's Prayer

Partners program (during "Ordinary Time") served as another opportunity for me to take responsibility for growth in my spiritual life.

What differences do I see in my spiritual life as a result of my commitment with another church member to pray daily for each other?

- As a committed Prayer Partner, I focused on the needs of another of God's children rather than worrying about the petty concerns and inconveniences in my own life.

- While praying daily for my Partner, I found that I instinctively put my trust in God to calm her fears and show her solutions to her worries.

- Knowing that my Partner was praying for me, I also knew a sense of calm that opened my heart to hear God's message for me.

Meeting occasionally and discussing our prayer needs helped me become more comfortable talking about prayer, spirituality and God's presence in our world—not just with my Partner, but with anyone I meet.

## Day 6 of Lent - February 23

# Be

*Devotion contributed by: Paul Jensen*

I use the following Bible verse as a mantra if I start feeling stressed or overwhelmed:

Be Still and Know That I Am God

Be Still and Know That I Am

Be Still and Know

Be Still

Be

## Day 7 of Lent - February 24

# Daffodils

*Devotion contributed by: Mary McKay*

Growing up in Wadena, for me Lent was often about not eating chocolate. My childhood friends and I all went to various churches but every year it seemed the question we asked of one another

was, “What are you going to give up for Lent?” All options were considered...movies, ice cream, talking on the phone, but none were respected like cake, cookies, and candy. So inevitably, one or more of us would be ‘not eating chocolate’ or feeling horribly guilty for eating chocolate, for 40 days. My mother, the normal busy mother, drove us to our activities, attended Bible Study, AAUW, Eastern Star, and Circle, endlessly prepared meals and extra batches of caramel rolls for church, would say, “Oh Mary!” and laugh. Every Lent, my very busy mother took daffodil orders for the Cancer Society. She would deliver the orders in the spring when the flowers brought so much joy to the still wintry streets of our town. As an adult, I cannot see a daffodil without thinking of my Mom and her little checklist of



orders. You would think I would have learned this as a child but it was only a few years ago that it dawned on me, there are many ways to think of God during Lent, you can read a devotional, visit a friend, give something up or even help a good cause.

## Day 8 of Lent - February 25

# The Stranger

*Devotion contributed by: Clayton Helmer*

Several years ago, maybe 2001 or 2002, we were celebrating our family Christmas with Silva’s parents in St. Cloud over Epiphany week-

end. Silva’s father had to catch a flight on Sunday morning to join some other relatives on a ski trip out west. The plan was for me to drive John to the MSP airport in his car, and Silva and the boys would come home later that day.

On Saturday, I proposed that we leave that night, stay at our home in St. Paul and then leave for the airport in the morning. As the activities of the day went on, watching the weather (it was very cold), we decided that we would leave early on Sunday. I was disappointed. I wanted to sleep in my own bed and I wanted to stop at Arby’s for one of the croissant breakfast sandwiches which I absolutely craved. However, I realized I could still stop at Arby’s after I dropped John at the airport.

We made the early morning trip and John was off. I planned to come home via Hwy 5 and Snelling, because I knew there was an Arby’s in Highland Park on Snelling. But, when I got there, it wasn’t open. I was dismayed, but not deterred. I knew there was another Arby’s on University Avenue. I pressed on and pulled into the University Avenue store. I parked the car and started toward the restaurant. A woman came to me from across the street. She was noticeably troubled. She said she was just at the assisted living facility across the way and had asked if she could work for them to earn enough money for a bus ticket. They refused. Her father was in St. Cloud, and he was dying, and she needed to get there to see him one last time.

I’m generally suspicious of panhandlers. I was hungry, and the sandwich I wanted was just yards away. I wanted this woman to leave me alone. I looked in my wallet. I only had a twenty dollar bill. I asked her how much she needed for the bus, she said twelve dollars. I suggested that I go get some change, and she noted that they weren’t open for breakfast on Sundays. Again, I was dismayed. I looked at the woman again and sensed that her plight was genuine. I handed her the twenty. She said I could come collect it from her later that week as she just lived in an apartment across the avenue. I refused. I told her to take the money and go to St. Cloud (the place where I had just been) and take care of her family. She

*(continued)*

cried, and she hugged me, blessed me, and called me “an Angel”. I drove home and cooked my own bacon and eggs and knew in my heart that God needed me to be at that specific Arby’s, at that specific time, to help that woman. All of the roadblocks in my plans, from our planned departure from St. Cloud, to the first Arby’s being closed leading me to the second Arby’s and the woman, happened intentionally.

In this time of Lenten sacrifice, I often remember how God lead me to give up the momentary object of my desire and all of the cash in my pocket, in order to help a stranger. God does micromanage us at times; we just have to be willing to follow his lead. He is a magnificent God!

## Day 9 of Lent - February 26

### Morning Song

*Devotion contributed by: Chris Mikesell*

My life is full of patterns – things I do repeatedly each week. Take Mondays for instance. Monday is the one day each week I set the alarm to wake me up. Monday is a busy day. It is my trumpet lesson day, so I like to practice in the morning. It is also the day of Centering Prayer. Most Monday mornings, on my way over to the church, I listen to one of my favorite songs. It is called “Morning Song”. It goes like this:

*There's tears that must come  
And fears that must go  
Many questions I'll ask  
But few answers I'll know*

*My dreams aren't as vivid  
As the deception of life  
And the disappointment it offers  
Brings disillusion to light*

*My soul holds me hostage  
With the sin that it hides  
And a blanket of loneliness  
Falls over all sides*

*Who knows what awaits us  
On the other side of night  
When morn burns the horizon  
And God brings his light*

*So rise in my head  
Shine through my fears  
Burn with your warmth  
Break through my tears*

*Sing to my spirit  
Let it fall on my ears  
And create me all over  
As morning light nears*

## Day 10 of Lent - February 27

### “Open My Eyes...”

*Devotion contributed by: Marion Hartwick, who remembers a favorite hymn that she and Bill shared.*

*Open my eyes, that I may see  
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;  
place in my hands the wonderful key  
that shall unclasp and set me free.*

Refrain:

*Silently now I wait for thee  
ready, my God, thy will to see.  
Open my eyes,(v.2 ears, v.3 heart)  
Illumine me, Spirit Divine!*

*Open my ears, that I may hear  
voices of truth thou sendest clear;  
and while the wave notes fall on my ear,  
everything false will disappear.*

*Open my mouth, and let me bear  
gladly the warm truth everywhere;  
open my heart and let me prepare  
love with thy children thus to share.*

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## Second Sunday of Lent - February 28

*Psalm 27 (New International Version)*

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—  
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life—  
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*When evil men advance against me  
to devour my flesh,*

*(continued)*

*when my enemies and my foes attack me,  
they will stumble and fall.*

*Though an army besiege me,  
my heart will not fear;  
though war break out against me,  
even then will I be confident.*

*One thing I ask of the LORD,  
this is what I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD  
and to seek him in his temple.*

*For in the day of trouble  
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;  
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle  
and set me high upon a rock.*

*Then my head will be exalted  
above the enemies who surround me;  
at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with  
shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make music to the LORD.*

*Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;  
be merciful to me and answer me.*

*My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"  
Your face, LORD, I will seek.*

*Do not hide your face from me,  
do not turn your servant away in anger;  
you have been my helper.  
Do not reject me or forsake me,  
O God my Savior.*

*Though my father and mother forsake me,  
the LORD will receive me.*

*Teach me your way, O LORD;  
lead me in a straight path  
because of my oppressors.*

*Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,  
for false witnesses rise up against me,  
breathing out violence.*

*I am still confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living.*

*Wait for the LORD;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the LORD.*

## **Day 11 of Lent - March 1 Through the Eyes of Children**

*Devotion contributed by: Tommy T. and Catherine L.*

*Deena:* Why do we go to church?

*Catherine:* Because sometimes I like dancing and Mommy has to sing.

*Tommy:* For thank you for God and this is why Jesus died.

*Deena:* What is the best part of Sunday School?

*Catherine:* I like to play.

*Tommy:* Sitting down.

*Deena:* What do you want to tell people?

*Catherine:* Love God and thank you for the toys.

*Tommy:* Love everything in the whole wide world.

*Prayer: Thank you God for children.*

## **Day 12 of Lent - March 2 The Lord Looks In On the Heart**

*Devotion contributed by: Deena Strohman*

My favorite Bible verse is I Samuel 16:7b. As I remember, it says "*The Lord does not see as mortals see. They look on the outward appearance, while the Lord looks in on the heart.*" I find this comforting, because despite misunderstandings, miscommunications, and unexpected happenings, God knows your intentions to do good to others. God does not expect people to look perfect or be perfect or act perfectly, so we do not need to expect it of ourselves.

*Thought: I can do my best and that is enough.*



## Day 13 of Lent - March 3 Follower?

*Devotion contributed by: Doug Weiss*

*Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?" Luke 9:23-25*

Lent is a time to ask ourselves, "What does it mean for me to be a follower of Jesus?" The theologian Søren Kierkegaard suggests that we frequently confuse the term follower with the word admirer. A follower, Kierkegaard argues, strives to be what they admire. Alternatively, the admirer remains personally detached.

Of course, to admire Jesus is not a bad thing. Much as we might admire Mother Teresa or or Mannahatta Gandhi, (or add your own favorite hero here), Jesus can be admired for his life of sacrifice and unwavering commitment. However, admirers tend to be a detached lot. They are much like an audience in a theater (or church?) always (often?) remaining at a safe distance never taking any risks.

Nicodemus was an admirer of Jesus. He was an honorable and scholarly man of high social and political standing in the community. He wanted to follow Jesus. He really did. But what was this stuff about having to be "born again"? Nicodemus couldn't risk all that he had worked for all his life and the respect of his family and friends. If Jesus had had an "admirer category" perhaps to get into some lesser heaven, I am sure that Nicodemus would have jumped at it.

So again this Lent, I ask myself, and for a change others, do we want to admire the historical Jesus from our pews or follow Jesus as he leads us into a messy world of personal relationships with neighbor and friends. All the while we must remember that we are not making decisions, solving problems, or creating solutions; we are merely following Jesus.

## Day 14 of Lent - March 5 Slow Down

*Devotion contributed by: Bob Scopatz*

As you may know, I work in traffic safety and am very conscientious about safety. As my Lenten observance last year, I decided to give up the very natural practice of "exceeding the speed limit". That's right! I decided to drive at or below the posted limit for a complete year. And I made it through to today. I continue the practice today.

It may not be the most God-centered choice of Lenten observances, but it has blessed my life in many ways. For one thing, I always have a clear path in front of me. I see more of the world around me. And, I most certainly love and respect my fellow travelers more than I would if I viewed them as constantly "in my way" — the natural reaction to anyone going slower than I am on the road. It's also safer for me and my family, so we get to enjoy each other more, too.

I guess the thing that struck me about this was that sometimes God just asks us to do something active in an area we care most about already. I care about driving safety because of the work I do. I used to drive with the prevailing traffic. Now I drive at a legal speed. It's not a big difference, but it makes all the difference in how I travel.

It's not deep or profound, but it does have symbolic meaning, and it has meant more to me than any of the vows I made and broke over the years.



## Day 15 of Lent - March 5

# Comfort in Psalms

*Devotion contributed by: Katharine Tondra*

I always liked the 23rd Psalm. The words and message take away fear of the unknown for me. I also hear that God is there for me to comfort me at all times.

*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for  
His name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: For thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the  
presence of mine enemies;  
Thou annointest my head with oil; My cup  
runneth over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all  
the days of my life, and I will dwell in the  
House of the Lord forever.*

King James Version

## Day 16 of Lent - March 6

# The Cross

*Devotion contributed by: Phyllis Bigbee*

The Cross. It comes in many sizes, colors and forms and found on earrings, pins, rings, bracelets and necklaces. When you wear a Cross:

Is it a decoration?

Is it a declaration?

A decoration to spruce up your outfit?

Or a declaration of your faith?

## Third Sunday of Lent - March 7

# Gift of the Spirit

*Devotion contributed by: Mary Jagerson Markgraf  
who reminds us that the Spirit of God is available to  
us all year long...Lent, Easter, and Christmas.*

Good news! It arrived just this morning! I was pretty sure it was frozen under the house-size mound of snow in the cul de sac, possibly to reveal itself in spring. It may have blown away in this week's frigid wind. I had just about given up finding it before Wednesday night. Thank God it arrived! Truly.

I did the usual holiday stuff — showed up, smiled, said the words, bought, wrapped, shared, cooked, hugged, gave, accepted and clapped. Ho Ho Hum, just couldn't find it.

The windchill is minus 35 degrees, the sun is bouncing off the ever-changing, blindingly white landscape. The roads are shiny with packed snow. It hurts to breathe in the cold air. A great time and place to be searching.

The 'Wiggle Room' was wild, until it came to me. Suddenly it was quiet. God's little actors were at peace and before I could worry about the possibilities, it swooped down and got me square in the heart, soul and mind. It was so casual and happened so naturally that I know the others had no idea.

My Christmas Spirit was delivered by a trio of moms singing 'It Came Upon A Midnight Clear'. Holding little kids, blocking an escape route, sans a fancy arrangement, dancers, trick lighting or a horn section; they delivered what I couldn't find. Beautiful voices singing my all time favorite Christmas song. What a gift! And in the nick of time.

The worries of the world are lighter now. I hope all of you have had an easier time finding the Christmas Spirit. Singing is out of the question for me, but I will pray with you, for peace, joy and your health.

## Day 17 of Lent - March 8

# Word Searching

Devotion contributed by: Nancy Seeger

F	O	R	E	H	E	A	D	D	I	E	E	L	B	I	B
C	N	A	S	H	W	E	D	N	E	S	D	A	Y	M	D
T	O	F	E	H	S	E	L	T	S	O	P	A	A	O	I
N	I	A	L	F	R	E	T	S	A	E	D	R	D	U	S
E	T	S	F	A	T	O	N	E	C	S	E	R	I	R	C
M	A	T	D	T	N	I	V	I	R	P	P	J	R	N	I
A	R	S	E	T	E	O	V	U	P	P	A	E	F	N	P
T	A	S	N	U	L	R	H	U	A	T	S	S	D	O	L
S	P	C	I	E	E	T	S	L	M	U	S	U	O	I	E
E	E	O	A	S	Y	T	M	U	R	I	O	S	O	T	M
T	R	M	L	D	S	S	U	R	W	O	V	I	G	A	A
W	P	M	N	A	A	D	E	L	A	W	E	N	E	R	R
E	S	U	L	Y	I	C	N	E	S	I	R	G	F	B	D
N	A	N	R	R	T	R	A	D	I	T	I	O	N	E	I
M	D	I	T	I	R	I	P	S	Y	L	O	H	I	L	G
S	O	O	O	S	S	E	N	R	E	D	L	I	W	E	R
E	G	N	O	I	X	I	F	I	C	U	R	C	N	C	A
N	A	I	T	S	I	R	H	C	R	E	Y	A	R	P	S

APOSTLES	LENT
ASH WEDNESDAY	LOVE
ATONE	MARDI GRAS
BIBLE	MAUNDY THURSDAY
CELEBRATION	MOURN
CHRISTIAN	NEW TESTAMENT
COMMUNION	PALMS
CRUCIFIXION	PASSOVER
DIE	PRAYER
DISCIPLE	PREPARATION
EASTER	RENEWAL
FASTS	RESURRECTION
FAT TUESDAY	RISEN
FOOD	SELF DENIAL
FOREHEAD	SERVICE
GOD	SING
GOOD FRIDAY	TRADITION
HOLY SPIRIT	TRIDUUM
JESUS	VOW
LAST SUPPER	WILDERNESS

The unused letters spell out a phrase:

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## Day 18 of Lent - March 9

# Connection to God

Devotion contributed by: Alan G. Padgett

*"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the person whose sin the LORD does not count against him, and in whose spirit is no deceit."*

Psalm 32:1-2

I am drawn more often now than ever before in my Christian life to the spirituality of the Psalms. These ancient hymns and poems from Israel speak deeply to the human condition across the ages. One word they use which we are sometimes uncomfortable with is "sin". But just what is sin? This is a good topic for Lent!

*Lent* is an old word that simply meant "spring" but now has only a Christian use. In the church calendar, with its center around the life of Jesus Christ, Lent is a time when we remember the temptation of Jesus in the desert, and prepare our souls for Palm and Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday; that is, for the events leading up to Easter. For the Church, Lent has long been a time of self-examination, and sometimes of denial, not for the sake of self-deprecation but for the sake of remembering what is truly important in life: our relationship with the Triune God, and so also with our neighbors. As Jesus told Satan during the original forty days in the desert, when he was being tempted, *"People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."* (Jesus is quoting Scripture here, Deut. 8:3). Our connection to God in faith, worship and obedience, not physical things or pleasures, is the most important relationship in life and in death.

Lent reminds us that we are all "sinners" and in need of forgiveness and healing. There are no outsiders nor insiders here. Church members are just as much sinners as everyone else. And being a sinner is not about being a "bad person" or somehow evil. Good people are sinners, too. We are not talking here about low self esteem, or therapy, but about a relationship of failure, forgiveness and growth. All of us have places in our

(continued)

lives where we can grow in grace, love, and righteousness. None of us is free from "sin," understood as being less than fully holy before God. Since sin is a state of brokenness, between ourselves and God first of all, and also between ourselves and others, seasons when we focus on our own need for repentance, forgiveness, and grace are good for the soul. This gives us an open space to make room for those less-than-perfect people God places in our lives every day; that we might love and forgive them also in the name of Jesus. Lent always leads to the Cross, and the Cross always leads to Resurrection. Thank God for this abundant grace.

## Day 19 of Lent - March 10

# The Ant and the Contact Lens

*Devotion contributed by: Clay Helmer*

Brenda was almost halfway to the top of the tremendous granite cliff. She was standing on a ledge where she was taking a breather during this, her first rock climb. As she rested there, the safety rope snapped against her eye and knocked out her contact lens.

"Great," she thought. "Here I am on a rock ledge, hundreds of feet from the bottom and hundreds of feet to the top of this cliff, and now my sight is blurry." She looked and looked, hoping that somehow it had landed on the ledge. But it just wasn't there. She felt the panic rising in her, so she began praying. She prayed for calm, and she prayed that she might find her contact lens.

When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye and her clothing for the lens, but it was not to be found. Although she was calm now that she was at the top, she was saddened because she could not clearly see across the range of mountains. She thought of the Bible verse "*The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.*" She thought, "Lord, You can see all these mountains. You know every stone and leaf, and You know exactly where my contact lens is. Please help me."

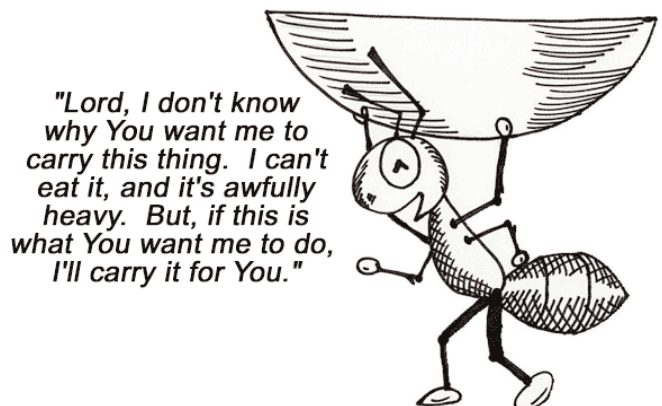
Later, when they had hiked down the trail to the bottom of the cliff they met another party of climbers just starting up the face of the cliff. One of them shouted out, "Hey, you guys! Anybody lose a contact lens?"

Well, that would be startling enough, but you know why the climber saw it? An ant was moving slowly across a twig on the face of the rock, carrying it!

The story doesn't end there. Brenda's father is a cartoonist. When she told him the incredible story of the ant, the prayer, and the contact lens, he drew a cartoon of an ant lugging that contact lens with the caption, "Lord, I don't know why You want me to carry this thing. I can't eat it, and it's awfully heavy. But if this is what You want me to do, I'll carry it for You."

In all of the things we are involved in, church committees, scouting, coaching, work; and all of the other things we do in our day to day lives, we sometimes ponder why we continue to do these things that are at times burdensome. I think it would do all of us good to say, "God, I don't know why You want me to carry this load. I am not good at it and it's awfully heavy. But, if You want me to carry it, I will." God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

Yes, I do love GOD. He is my source of existence and my Savior. He keeps me functioning each and every day. Without Him, I am nothing, but with Him...*I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.* Philippians 4:13



"I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Phil. 4:13

## Day 20 of Lent - March 11

# I Am Thankful

*Devotion contributed by: Deena Strohman*

I am so thankful for my church community. The people are welcoming and understanding even if I am having a bad day or a bad year. I know that I can be quiet if I need to be quiet and loud if I need to be loud. I know that I can be serious or that I can be playful at church. People don't get mad at me if I have trouble sitting still. I get to teach Sunday School, which is a combination of teaching, learning, and playing. When I work on projects or on a committee, the teams balance out each others' strengths and weaknesses when we work together. I have many friends at church. I feel comfortable there. For this, I am very thankful.

*Thought: For what are you most thankful?*

## Day 21 of Lent - March 12

# Language of the Spirit

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

On a recent morning, while meeting with others for Centering Prayer and listening to the reading of a passage of Scripture, the word 'spirit' caught my attention. Spirit is a word with a meaning essential for the credibility of Christianity, but a word whose meaning I have great difficulty to discern. This evening, upon opening a book I have been reading, I came to the following statement:

"The tragedy of truth is not the lie that contradicts it but its lack of incarnational witness. Jesus brought truth to humans through the incarnation of love and redemption. The truth is that God himself is given to us through the person of Jesus Christ, not just information about God. The apostle Paul presents a clear vision of this truth when he wrote, "*When we cry, 'Abba! Father' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...[T]hat very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.*" (Romans 8:15-16, 26). Paul reminds us

that the language of the Spirit is the language of Jesus – it is the wordless language of the soul of God. The soul can bear things that seem unbearable to the mind. The soul can speak of things for which there are no words. When the church learns to be silent in the presence of the Word, it speaks the truth." *Ray S. Anderson, An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches, page 218.*

## Day 22 of Lent - March 13

# The Lord's Prayer

*Devotion contributed by: Pastor Donna Martinson*

*Our Father...*and Mother, you are our source of life and being;

*in heaven...*You are not only here, but in a sphere of existence above/beyond/around us;

*hallowed be your name...*Though we do not know it, because we do not know your name, show us how to keep your name holy and truly worship you. You have called us to be holy, just as you are holy. Thank you for the gift and possibility of holiness.

*Your kingdom come...*your reign, your rule, your way of living be more evident among us.

*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...*your will be done on earth now, here for it is so in heaven.

*Give us this day our daily bread...*help us live in this present moment, not anxious for tomorrow, but seeing today in its wonder and glory; give us all daily bread—whether in the mountains of Afghanistan or the shanty towns of Haiti, the gated communities of the U.S. or the isolated farm communities of the central plains; help us ask only for bread and not luxuries beyond what we need, so that others may have bread as well.

*And forgive us our trespasses...*for we move into ways of being that are outside your kingdom, against your will and in violation of your covenant to see the hungry fed;

*as we forgive those who trespass against us...*when we feel pushed and squeezed, trampled by the hurtful actions of others, grant us

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your grace and patience so that we may learn from you how to forgive.

**And lead us not into temptation...**keep us pure in heart, humble in spirit, and freely bound to you rather than setting our hopes on transitory things;

**but deliver us from evil...**redeem us all from the death-dealing powers of this world, open our eyes to recognize evil and oppression in their various forms, and help us work to repair this broken world.

**For yours is the kingdom...**You are our ruler, sovereign, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Prince of Peace;

**and the power...**at work in our world and in us;  
**and the glory forever...**may our lives honor and give glory to you;

**Amen.** May it be so. Thanks be to God!

## Fourth Sunday of Lent - March 14

### “O Jesus I Have Promised...”

*Devotion contributed by: Marion Hartwick, who remembers a favorite hymn that she and Bill shared.*

*O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;  
be thou forever near me,  
my Master and my friend.  
I shall not fear the battle if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if thou wilt be my guide.*

*O let me feel thee near me! The world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;  
but Jesus, draw thou nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.*

*O let me hear thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,*

*the murmurs of self will.*

*O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen,  
thou guardian of my soul.*

*O Jesus, thou hast promised to all who follow thee  
that where thou art in glory  
there shall thy servant be.  
And Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;  
O give me grace to follow,  
my Master and my Friend.*

## Day 23 of Lent - March 15 No Matter What

*Devotion contributed by: Sarah Leach*

While driving to a meeting with a co-worker mid-January, we saw a church sign announcing “Christmas Eve Services--6:00 PM”. After the obvious jokes about whether they knew Christmas had come and gone, or if they were getting a good start on next year, our low-brow humor turned to the timing of the service.

“Our church has Christmas Eve Service at five,” I said.

“Ya know,” my co-worker replied, “out here they need time to sober up before going to church.”

“Yeah,” I agreed, “it is better not to go to church drunk ... BUT ... God loves you anyway.”

“God loves me even if I’m plastered?” he asked with a chuckle.

I’m certain what the answer is, and I answered, “YES.”

## Day 24 of Lent - March 16 Be Still and Know

### **That I Am God.** Psalm 46:10

*Devotion contributed by: Jane Keeley*

This verse from Psalm 46 is very familiar to me. I see it every time I look at our son because

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he has it tattooed on his neck. It is prominently displayed as a challenge to him and also to everyone he meets. The challenge presented is two-fold. First to know that, “*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in time and trouble.*” Psalm 46:1

Second, we are being challenged to be still. The act of being still is the part of this verse that I think about a lot. I know that our God is a mighty God and I know that God is always with me. However, being still presents a different challenge. Our lives are often like a merry-go-round. We are rarely still. How often do we get off that merry-go-round? How often do we even try? Do we even have a time or place where we can be still?

Finding that still time in our busy active lives can be difficult. The thing is, though, being still can allow you to open a clear channel from you to God and actively engage in prayer. Even more importantly, your stillness makes it possible for God to SPEAK to you. To tell you what God’s wishes are for your life and to tell you of actions you should take.

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the Bible restates Psalm 46:10 this way. “Step out of the Traffic! Take a long loving look at me, your High God ...” That advice is quite clear. Are you willing to give it a try? Are you willing to hear?

## Day 25 of Lent - March 17

### Birthday Blessings

*Devotion contributed by: Katharine Tondra*

My children and I have been birthday card deliverers for this congregation for 9 years. We have been blessed to do this for many reasons. We can show people that we remember them and that they are important. We can celebrate with them another year of life. We always have lovely, multigenerational visits, which are devotions in themselves.

## Day 26 of Lent - March 18

### Sunrise

*Devotion contributed by: Val Cervenka*

At the church I grew up in, Hope United Methodist in Oakdale, Minnesota, we had an Easter sunrise service each year. You can imagine that as a teenager, I wasn’t all that enthusiastic about getting up at 5:00 a.m. for the 6:30 service. But the promise of pancakes after church was a great motivator.

Once at church, shivering in the new Easter dress my mother had made for me, the early morning camaraderie and sense of belonging there transformed my outlook. What began as a reluctant struggle to move from beneath the warm comfort of my blankets, I came to recognize as a tiny sacrifice - one I could easily endure compared to the sacrifice Jesus had made – and endured. By the time we were singing “Christ the Lord Is Ris’n Today,” the sun had also risen, shining through our church’s stained-glass windows and onto the linoleum floor, filling us all with a multi-colored warmth and the glory and love of the risen Lord.

## Day 27 of Lent - March 19

### There is a Season

*Devotion contributed by: Silva Helmer*

Seasonal Affective Disorder runs in my family. If you aren't familiar with this disorder, count yourself lucky. It causes people to experience depression when the days shorten. And it makes this time of year twice as difficult. Not only is there the post-Christmas let-down (that's it?!), but the lack of sunshine is at its greatest. During these trying times, I remember that everything ends. At first, this might sound like a depressing thought. All good things must come to an end, is what people say. They are only partly right. All good and all *bad* things must come to an end. Just as the bright summer sun dims, so does the dull sun of winter brighten again. The birds fly south, then return north. The blooms fall off the roses, and, in spring, new buds grow. If we only

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focus on what is lost, we may forget to see what is still to come. So, remember as we look upon the death of our Savior. It is only by dying that Jesus is able to rise again.

## Day 28 of Lent - March 20

# A Litany of Thanksgiving for People of the World

*Devotion contributed by: Nancy Seeger. Adopted from "Meeting in Faith" by Elizabeth Esperson. First used in Bangalore, India — 1993.*

Thank you and praise you for sisters and brothers of *Indigenous Traditions*, for their still living cultures and their great respect toward life.

Thank you and praise you for *Zoroastrian* brothers and sisters, who consistently hand down to us the wisdom of ancient times.

Thank you and praise you for *Hindu* sisters and brothers, for their openheartedness and kindly disposition toward those of other faiths.

Thank you and praise you for *Buddhist* brothers and sisters, for their peace, compassion, and relinquishing of self.

Thank you and praise you for *Jain* sisters and brothers, for their deep respect for life and practice of nonviolence.

Thank you and praise you for *Taoist* and Confucianist brothers and sisters, for their ways are serene and their thoughts are wise.

Thank you and praise you for *Jewish* sisters and brothers, for their enriching symbols of worship and their cherishing of tradition.

Thank you and praise you for *Christian* brothers and sisters, for their message of love and practicing of forgiveness.

Thank you and praise you for *Muslim* sisters and brothers, for their commitment in prayer and faithfulness in worship.

Thank you and praise you for *Sikh* brothers and sisters, for their warm hospitality and public

witness to their faith.

Thank you and praise you for *Baha'i* sisters and brothers, for their genuine openness and over-riding desire for unity.

Thank you and praise you for *Unitarian Universalist* brothers and sisters, for their questing spirits that explore the many facets of truth.

Thank you and praise you for those of every faith tradition, named and unnamed, for the variety and richness of their spiritualities, for our common quest for truth, our yearning after love, our longing for peace and commitment to justice. Ever unite us as we pray, help us and inspire us, that we might live more truly for you throughout our lives. *AMEN*



## Fifth Sunday of Lent - March 21

# Love and Justice

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

“Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is correcting everything that stands against love.”

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

“The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another.”

*Thomas Merton*

Power in itself has no ethical value, it is neither good nor bad, it is neutral, it is merely a tool. Justice and love are not equivalent. The goal of justice is to employ power according to the standard of love. Justice must be subordinate to love. Justice is less than love. The essence of love is compassion.

An effort to do justice must be informed and shaped by love. As a Christian I am called to always strive with sincere hope to accomplish what is impossible, that is that all my acts be informed and shaped by perfect love for others. I cannot even try to live according to this stan-

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dard except by the gifts of humility and faith available by the grace of God. Humility is honest self-respect devoid of pride and boasting and any self-judgment of my worth relevant to the worth of others. Faith is a decision to trust that God's love will always surround, inspire and support me as I strive to accomplish acts of love.

Bold words are no substitute for bold acts. My aspiration to live so that all my acts be informed and shaped by love is constantly frustrated by my impulse to act in response to pride and insecurity and fear. When I find the courage and strength to act with love and humility, seeking no reward, I am always rewarded. To work for justice, I must pray that by the grace of God I may have such humility and faith as will enable me to strive to make all of my acts informed and shaped by love.



## Day 29 of Lent - March 22

### To Know Love

*Devotion contributed by: Mimi Titzler*

Twenty plus years ago I served on the worship committee at a United Methodist Church in the northern suburbs. When we were planning for Lent, the pastor raised the possibility of introducing foot washing as a part of the Maundy Thursday worship service. While I thought the idea was a little strange, the pastor seemed very keen to try it, so the committee agreed.

On the evening of the service, we assembled basins, towels, and warm water. We invited members of the congregation to come forward and have their feet washed, as Christ had washed the feet of his disciples before the Last Supper. Still skeptical, I washed the feet of several people. Then, someone washed mine.

It was lovely! It felt very kind and tender, and very caring. The physical act of having my feet washed was a transforming experience, almost like a sacrament. I wondered if the foot washing that Jesus performed for the disciples was intended to help them understand that he would always "care for" them, and that he would never leave them. Perhaps it is possible for us to "know" God's love in a simple act, without words or ceremony, as I did that evening. It was a gift.

## Day 30 of Lent - March 23

### Volunteering at Project Home

*Devotion contributed by: Deena Strohman*

I have been volunteering at Project Home for a few years. I think the reason is that it would be so easy for me to end up homeless or in need, so in God's love, I can minister to others. The people are just people and the kids are just kids. They need love and support and time to play and learn. Sometimes all I have to give is time, so that is what I do. Sometimes I get stressed that I cannot fix everything for the people who are homeless. I wrote a song verse one time about that. With so many people and places these days asking for time and money, how do I decide what is the best use of my resources? I may not ever know for certain. I guess that I chose Project Home or else Project Home chose me and so that is what I do. Some days, volunteering there is filled with frustration, while others are filled with delight. I just hope I can make a little of people's time brighter on this journey of life.

*Thought: How do I choose to help others?*

## Day 31 of Lent - March 24

### Growing Gifts

*Devotion contributed by: Lori Mikesell*

It's been nearly a decade since Mom died, but I still remember this story. Chris, Wynn and I had temporarily relocated to the rural Kansas farm house where I grew up to care for her. During the ten weeks we were away, many things were forgotten, including a package of flower seedlings I'd ordered weeks before. It arrived the day Mom died, having travelled from Holland, to Minnesota, and finally, to Kansas. Needless to say, after nearly a month of bouncing around the world, the fragile plants showed no sign of life when I opened the box. My first instinct was to throw the lot away, but on a whim, I went ahead and planted them when we returned to

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Minnesota. I didn't have much hope as I put them in the ground, but much to my surprise, nurtured by soil, sun and water, every one of the plants went on to produce some of the most beautiful blossoms in my garden that year – and every year since. Each year I look forward to their return, a visual reminder of God's great gift to us.

## Day 32 of Lent - March 25

### Easier to Share

*Devotion contributed by: Mark Tondra*

I feel gratitude towards Jesus on Maundy Thursday because he told us to remember him in such a communal and nourishing way as sharing a meal. It could have been something much more challenging like a 40-mile hike across the desert.

## Day 33 of Lent - March 26

### Everyone

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."*

*John 3:16, NRSV*

All of Christianity is founded on the crucifixion ("gave") and the resurrection ("eternal life") of Jesus Christ, the two connected events described by these few words. During the more than two thousand years that have passed following these events, Christians have been struggling in good faith to discern and agree upon the precise meaning of the words "gave his only Son," "believes in him," "perish," and "eternal life." There can be no doubt, however, that all that is described is the consequence – the expression – of God's love for everyone in this world. And "everyone" means every person, each individual. God knows each of us. God loves each of us. God is my God. God loves me!

## Day 34 of Lent - March 27

### Adversity

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

The Apostle's Creed tells me that Jesus "was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into Hell." God in Christ Jesus is with me, always, everywhere.

The Apostle's Creed tells me that Jesus "on the third day arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God." Jesus did not avoid adversity, but he survived adversity. With, by, through him, I will survive adversity.

The Apostle Paul assures me of God's love in Christ Jesus. *"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38-39 NRSV). God's love is constant and unconditional.

Wherever I may be, whatever circumstances I may be in, everywhere and always, I have only to reach out to find that God is with me. God's love does not shield me from adversity, but supports me in adversity. God's love has enabled me to survive adversity. Confidence in God's love is what has enabled me to go forward even when I have been alone and lost, even when I have been bent down by my burdens, uncertain, and fearful, like a blind man crossing a highway in the midst of heavy traffic.



## Sixth Sunday of Lent -

### March 28

### Palm/Passion Sunday

*Luke 19: 28-40 (New International Version)*

*After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there,*

which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.' "

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

They replied, "The Lord needs it."

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."



## Day 35 of Lent - March 29

### Clothed in Love

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Col. 3:12-14 NRSV

As recipients of the gift of God's love revealed by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are called to "clothe yourselves with love..." The clothing of love is made of many fabrics. They include compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness, and that forgiveness is unconditional. (And see, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.)

Perfect love is expressed in action, and is the product of such compassion as makes the welfare of the loved one the only matter of consequence to the lover. Jesus Christ by his crucifixion and resurrection revealed perfect love for humankind.

Have I really accepted the gift of God's love? Surely such love is more than a warm blanket. Is not such love a force compelling action expressing love for others? Have I only wrapped myself in a warm blanket, while carefully avoiding in-breathing of a spark to ignite an inner fire which might drive me to move out of those places where I am comfortable and into unfamiliar arenas? Contemplating that possibility is frightening. I must pray for the courage and strength to fully accept God's love, and for inspiration and strength to express such love for others.

## Day 36 of Lent - March 30

### See the Suffering

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

At the crucifixion of Jesus: "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!'" (Luke 23:35, NRSV) "And the people stood by, watching..." These were the same people who a few days earlier had cheered and praised Jesus on his entry into the city. Now they watched his crucifixion. Why did the leaders demand the crucifixion of Jesus? Did the people approve? Did the people have an opinion? What should the people have done? What could they have done?

Today, in Saint Anthony Park, Saint Paul, Minnesota, can I see suffering or am I careful to be blind to the suffering of persons in distress? What excuses do I find for not acting? Do I excuse myself by judging the person in distress to be suffering the predictable and just consequences of his or her own improvident acts? Do I defend my excuse by refusing to question the merit of social, economic and political systems and procedures well conceived but now perhaps perverted by long abuse and so drained of their original substance that they have become lifeless,

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hollow gods? Is God's love only offered on certain conditions? Can there be any excuse for my not acting?

I must open my eyes and see. I must open my heart, my mind, and my doors. I must act. I must not stand by watching the suffering of a person who is homeless, hungry, ill and without medical care, alone, unwanted, unemployed, unneeded. What can I do? What should I do? How can I know? What can we do? What should we do? How can we know?

## Day 37 of Lent - March 31 Community

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

*"For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness."*

Romans 12:4-8 (NRSV)

In all things I must act as one part of the body of Christ, one part of our community that is our local congregation. I cannot alone discern what needs be done; I cannot alone accomplish what needs to be done. I must carefully determine what particular gifts I have to offer for employment in our common enterprise. It is only by combining our individual skills through union in community that we can effectively relieve and support persons suffering in adversity, that we can effectively express God's love for all.



## Day 38 of Lent - April 1 Small Things, Great Love

*Devotion contributed by: William Glew*

*"And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love."*

1 Corinthians 13:13

And from Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

*"What I do you cannot do, but what you do, I cannot do. The needs are great, and none of us ever does great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."*

*"If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one."*

*"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."*

*"God doesn't require us to succeed; he only requires that we try."*

## Day 39 of Lent - April 2 "The Legend"

*Devotion contributed by: Mimi Titzler*

*Christ, when a child, a garden made,  
And many roses flourish there,  
He watered them three times a day  
To make a garland for His hair.*

*And when in time the roses bloomed,  
He called the children in to share.  
They tore the flow'rs from every stem,  
And left the garden stript and bare.*

*"How wilt thou weave thyself a crown  
Now that the roses all are dead?"*

*"Ye have forgotten that the thorns  
Are left for Me," the Christ child said.*

*They plaited then a crown of thorns  
And laid it rudely on His head.*

*A garland for His forehead made  
For roses: drops of blood instead.*

*Of blood instead!*

Words from a musical work by P. Tchaikowsky.

English translation by Nathan Haskell Dole

## Day 40 of Lent - April 3

# “Footprints”

*Devotion contributed by: Katharine Tondra*

I like the *Footprints* message. God spoke, "My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. When you saw only one set of footprints that was when I carried you." God is there for us. God cares for us. God will help us along in our time of need.

### *Footprints*

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the LORD. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene He noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One belonging to him and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it. "LORD, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The LORD replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you! During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."  
—Carolyn Carty, 1963

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## Seventh Sunday of Lent - April 4

# Easter Sunday

*John 20: 1-18 (New International Version)*

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and*

*saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"*

*So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)*

*Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.*

*They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

*"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

*"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"*

*Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."*

*Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

*She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher)*

*Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "*

*Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*