



encounter **LENT**

A 40-Day Journey

Devotional: 20 - 26 March 2022

[40+Days_+A+Lent+Encounter+Booklet.pdf](#)

Enriched by Grace, Bearing Fruit

Luke 13:1-9

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So, he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still, I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until

I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’” Luke 13:6-9

You can read this parable as referring to Israel. Initially given the promise of God that God would bless them, and through them, bless the whole world, the parable says that, in Jesus, Israel is being given another opportunity to remember who they are and what they are about in the world. You can read the parable as referring to the Christian movement down through the ages. We have forgotten who we are time and time again. History is littered with examples of Christians acting in very un-Christ-like fashion and the damage that has done both to people and to the Christian witness. Yet God is patient, even with the Church, and God is ever willing to accept our repentance and guide us toward fruitfulness that matters. Or you can read it personally.

How many promises have you made through your lifetime that you would make this change or that change or do this or do that, and how many of those promises that you have made to God, yourself, and others, that you have miserably failed in keeping. But God isn't giving up on you. You get another chance. Things can get better. My personal goals right now are very simple. Every day I want to pray and ask God for help and guidance, be the best person God desires me to be; live into the calling in my life; drink a lot of water; make time to have fun.

We are very likely to fail at one or more point during a day – but such failure is not unavoidable. God gives us the power to make choices and act on them. And even if we do fail, God will be patient with us as God is patient with all of us. If we listen closely enough to the truth of that last verse, there is a very good chance that we can also be patient with ourselves, even as we seek God's help in doing what we can.

MARK 10:46-52 - Read the passage above. Read the passage a second time. After reading the passage a third time, reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and desires. Say to God what's on your mind. Take two minutes (or more) in silence, then write down what you think God might be saying to you.

As we walk the path of discipleship, we find ourselves experiencing either consolation or desolation. Part of understanding the spiritual movements of our souls ... whether they come from the good spirit or the false spirit ... is identifying whether I am at this time experiencing consolation or desolation.

During Lent, we reflect upon our spiritual state and on our interior movement. Are we moving toward more doubt, fear, and anger? Or are we moving toward greater faith, hope, and love? The Ignatian principles of consolation and desolation can help us. A person dwells in a state of consolation when she or he is moving toward God's active presence in the world. We know we are moving in this way when we sense the growth of love or faith or mercy or hope—or any qualities we know as gifts of the Holy Spirit. If I am becoming more kind with people, and I experience this movement as life-giving and Christlike, I am in a state of consolation. Consolation can hold many emotions and experiences. Consolation does not mean that I feel constantly happy or at peace. In fact,

sometimes when I am doing precisely what God is leading me to do, I might feel negative pressure from others, or I might find the experience a challenge because I'm growing and learning. Yet if I sense in my spirit that I'm going the right way, this spiritual reality consoles me whether the day is bumpy or smooth.

A person dwells in a state of desolation when she or he is moving away from God's active presence in the world. We know we are moving in this way when we sense the growth of resentment, ingratitude, selfishness, doubt, fear, and so on. If my outlook becomes increasingly gloomy and self-obsessed, I am in a state of desolation. I am resisting God or, if not actively resisting, I am being led away from God by other influences. Desolation also holds many emotions and experiences. If I'm in desolation, I might try to alleviate the discomfort by drinking too much or seeking distraction through more work or social events. The food and drink and activity might feel quite good, but they are not leading me to greater joy, peace, and love. In fact, "false" consolations can help me avoid the true consolation of God's presence.

Desolation

- Turns us in on ourselves
- Drives us down the spiral ever deeper into our own negative feelings
- Cuts us off from community
- Makes us want to give up on the things that used to be important to us
- Takes over our whole consciousness and crowds out our distant vision
- Covers up all our landmarks [the signs of our journey with God so far]
- Drains us of energy

Consolation

- Directs our focus outside and beyond ourselves
- Lifts our hearts so that we can see the joys and sorrows of other people
- Bonds us more closely to our human community
- Generates new inspiration and ideas
- Restores balance and refreshes our inner vision
- Shows us where God is active in our lives and where God is leading us
- Releases new energy in us

As we learn to recognize when we are in desolation and consolation, we can respond accordingly: changing course (through prayer, community, discernment, spiritual direction) when in desolation, and staying the course when in consolation.

DAY 16 | Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

Through awareness of the spiritual consolations stirring in our hearts we will know that our God is for us, as for the pilgrim people in the desert, a 'pillar of cloud by day' and a 'pillar of fire by night' (Exodus 13:21 -22), a God who always walks by our side, leading us along the way." (Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 57) Imagine yourself living this kind of life. How does that kind of life feel? Do you want to live like this? Make a sincere prayer ... write it down or say it out loud ... asking God for this grace of spiritual awareness. Then take a few minutes in silence, making time for God to inspire within you a thought, a feeling, or a desire if He chooses.

DAY 17 | Friday of the Second Week of Lent

Today is Friday, the day when we especially remember Our Lord's passion and death. Jesus knows how it feels to experience the deepest and darkest desolation. Imagine yourself at the foot of the Holy Cross today. You're with Jesus in his most desolate moment. Mary, John, and Mary Magdalene are there too. You are with them in their grief. They are with you in yours. What does He look like, hanging there on the Cross? What does it feel like being on Calvary? Is it windy?

What does it smell like? Jesus catches your attention. He looks into your eyes. And you all pray together His prayer from the Cross. Read Psalm 22 today. Or, if you can, listen to Psalm 22 from an audio Bible instead. Keep your eyes closed. Be with Jesus and Mary and John and Mary Magdalene. Pray together Psalm 22. After your prayer, write about your experience.

DAY 18 | Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

In times of desolation, we cling to the Father in trust. Today, read Exodus 14. Read verses 10 - 20 a second time. As you read the passage a third time, notice what strikes you. What do you think? What do you feel? Talk to God about your thoughts and your feelings. Take a few minutes in silence to listen for the voice of God in your thoughts, your feelings, or your desires. Write down what you perceive God to be communicating to you today.

DAY 19 | Third Sunday of Lent

What do you want? Why have you chosen to take this 40-day journey? How do you want to be different on Easter than you are today? Remember your answer from the beginning of our 40 days. We're almost halfway through Lent. Stay strong. Lean upon the Lord and meditate in times of desolation, by which we should actively remember the graces which God has given us in the past. Finally, in consolation, we should prepare for the coming desolation. So today we remember why we do Lent; we remember what God has done for us in the past; and we write down what God is doing so that we might better remember it in the future. Read Psalm 77:10 - 14. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit. Remember one or two times where God has really come through for you in the past. Then write them down.

DAY 20 | Monday of the Third Week of Lent

Sometimes God will use times of desolation to strengthen us. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7 - 10. Read the passage a second time. Notice what sticks out to you. Read the part which sticks out to you a third time. What are your thoughts, feelings, and desires as you read? Say them to God. Take a few minutes in silence to listen for the voice of God in your thoughts, your feelings, or your desires. Write down what you perceive God to be communicating to you today.

DAY 21 | Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

Read John 15:1 - 10. Read the passage a second time. Notice what sticks out to you. Read the part which sticks out to you a third time. What are your thoughts, feelings, and desires as you read? Say them to God. Take a few minutes in silence to listen for the voice of God in your thoughts, your feelings, or your desires. Write down what you perceive God to be communicating to you today.

Day 22 | Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent

Flip back through your notes from the past week. What stood out to you from your prayer? Where does it seem like God has spoken? Remember that experience. Go back there. Ask God if He wants to take you deeper or if He wants to gift you with another insight.

With God as our Leader, may we be prepared to live another year under His guidance.

How can we pray for you today?

- We send our prayers and care to Ms. Sandy Wamser. Ms. Sandy suffered a stroke while vacationing in Arizona. She is going through therapy and testing; she is unable to travel back to Wisconsin at this time. At this time, we do not have an address to mail cards and notes. Ms. Sandy's cell number is 262.343.5444. PLEASE DO NOT CALL HER, but you may text her with prayers and words of encouragement.
- We ask for your continued prayers of healing and restoration for Rev. Jean Bartlett. She will move to a nursing facility where she will start both radiation and chemotherapy on 21 March 2022. We're also praying for Rev. Jon Bartlett for strength and courage. Cards and emails of comfort, healing and care can be sent to: Rev. Jean and Rev. Jon Bartlett, 813 Seymour Street, Waupun, WI 53963. Email address: bilojon@gmail.com

- We extend our deepest and passionate condolences to Mr. John Abuya and Family on the passing of his beloved bride and our precious Sister, Ms. Sandy Abuya. Card of love and support can be sent to: Mr. John Abuya, 328 East Washington Street, #1, Slinger, WI 53086.
- Thank you for your support and care of the family of Mr. Ted Meilahn on 7 March 2022 as we remembered him in love. Fair Winds and Following Seas, dear Shipmate.
- We send our caring and loving prayers to Mr. Brett Barnett as he continues to heal from shoulder surgery. Cards and notes can be mailed to: Mr. Brett and Mary Barnett, 932 Hillcrest Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Mr. Robert and Ms. Nancy Whitson. They're at home now. Please send your cards of healing and encouragement to: Mr. Robert and Ms. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Continued prayers of healing are extended to Ms. Bev Vogel who broke her left wrist. Correspondence can be mailed to: Ms. Bev Vogel, 125 Cedar Ridge Drive, #S143, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Mr. William (Bill) & Mrs. Ginger Hornung would love to hear from you! Cards or notes of encouragement or "just thinking of you" can be mailed to: W194N16744 Eagle Dr. Room 3, Jackson, WI 53037
- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to Ms. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Ms. Annie Griffin, Aunt of Pastor Clarissa (Bro. Martin), still request your prayers of healing and courage. Cards and notes for promises of healing, restoration and encouragement and can be mailed to: Ms. Annie Griffin, 1122 Hutchinson Ferry Road, Bainbridge, GA 39819
- Fifth Avenue UMC's Laity, Accountable Leadership Board ALB). To God be the glory, great things He has done! Lord in your mercy, please hear our prayer.
- Ms. Linda Green, sister of Ms. Debra Matthies, thank you for your prayers for strength and courage as her cancer has returned. Cards and notes can be mailed to: Ms. Linda Green, c/o Ms. Debra Matthies, 1466 North 12th Avenue, West Bend, WI 53090.
- Bro. Bob Krell, prayers for strength and healing. Please mail cards and notes of prayer and encouragement to: Bro. Bob Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr., cards and notes of support, cheer and well wishes for Mr. Len and Ms. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095
- Ms. Trisha Funke, daughter of Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel. Cards of encouragement and prayers for continued healing and diagnosis can be sent to her parents: Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend WI 53095
- Mr. Roger and Mrs. Nobi Sacia, are grateful for your prayers and cards of encouragement. Mr. Roger and Ms. Nobi, 1626 Jefferson Street, Madison WI 53711
- Mr. Phil Heimerl, son-in-law of Mike & Fay Lewis. He was just diagnosed with ALS.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, you are so patient with us. You are the God of the second chance, the seventy-seven times seven, chance. Like fertilizer slowly makes it healing ways through the plants that it feeds, may your Spirit slowly and steadily continue to lead, guide, empower, and encourage us, toward lives of love and fruitfulness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Your humble Pastor & Servant Leaders,
Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin