

IN YOUR Kindness

CATHOLIC PRAYERS
FOR LENT



Sr. Chris Koellhoffer

*Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.*

JOEL 2:13

COMPASSIONATE ONE, I hear your prophet's command to break open my heart through the deep inner soul work to which this holy season calls me. My heart, this fragile symbol of love, is so easily wounded. Could it be that what you actually invite me into is a tenderizing, a softening, a stretching of the boundaries so that I might more fully welcome you when you remind me that you are also in each one of my sisters and brothers? May I ready myself for the holy rending that creates a spaciousness for your love and your grace to make a home in me.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

... the LORD, your God, will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy.

DEUTERONOMY 30:16

COMPASSIONATE ONE, the options you set before me seem very large: life and prosperity or death and doom. Not a difficult choice! But in the day-to-day, it really comes down to the seemingly small selections, doesn't it? To routinely walk in your ways, to daily embrace and follow your rule of love, to thoughtfully put on your mind, your consciousness. Help me to practice this kind of discernment so that I may occupy a space forever in the landscape of your holy heart.

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish.

ISAIAH 58:6

COMPASSIONATE ONE, I notice Isaiah uses quite a few “-ing” verbs to describe the fasting that you desire: releasing, setting free, sharing, sheltering, clothing, not turning my back. This choice of the “-ing” suffix tells me that the form of fasting you call for is ongoing, not finished, not completed once and for all but needing my loving attentiveness moment by moment. May I embrace the fasting that is grounded in right relationship with the whole community, especially those who are yoked, homeless and oppressed.

*“Repairer of the breach,” they shall call you,
“Restorer of ruined homesteads.”*

ISAIAH 58:12

COMPASSIONATE ONE, such a beautiful name, such a profound call! How I long to be the one who repairs what is broken, who returns to its unblemished state what has been shattered, smashed, cracked, destroyed. Just a few days ago, you marked me with the sign of ashes. You marked me as one who refuses to believe that sin and death will have the last word. You marked me as one who is a bearer of hope, a repairer, a restorer. With your grace, may I live into this vocation with my whole heart.

*My refuge and my fortress,
my God in whom I trust.*

PSALM 91:2

COMPASSIONATE ONE, simply watching the news can fill my heart with fear. I see a world that is daily exploding in conflict, a world that is marked by acts of violence, hatred and indifference in the face of crying human need. Tell me, is there any place I can call safe? Tell me, where might I find security for myself and for all whom I love? With deep trust, I give my anxiety to you. I place my concerns in your welcoming embrace. Today, I hold in tenderness and fervent prayer those who long and search for the shelter of your loving heart.

*For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink...*

MATTHEW 25:35

COMPASSIONATE ONE, you tell me that there is no separation between your hunger, your thirst, your loneliness, your illness, your captivity and those same human experiences in my sisters and brothers who appear in my life in a multitude of ways. One and the same, you tell me. When I see them, I see you. In their vulnerability, I'm to recognize your face. In their need, I'm to hear your cry. In their presence, I'm to know the nearness of the Holy. May it be so!

*When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,
and from all his distress he saved him.*

PSALM 34:7

COMPASSIONATE ONE, I think I've discovered your soft spot. Your love for me is so unconditional that you can't help but pay attention when I cry out to you. When I cry out in shame. When I cry out in guilt. When I cry out in fear during a sleepless night. When I cry out in pain over a broken relationship. When I cry out in despair over the road ahead. When I cry out during this season of Lent, longing to grow closer to you. At all times, and especially in those times, may your loving gaze and your saving grace surround me.

*So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,
according to the LORD's bidding.*

JONAH 3:3

COMPASSIONATE ONE, I'm both startled and consoled by this response of Jonah. Like Jonah, I sometimes want to shut out your voice, to ignore your beckoning. Like Jonah, I'm inclined to flee over the largeness of what you may ask and at the prospect of my own seeming inadequacy. But you, the God of second and third and endless chances, didn't give up on Jonah. And I know that you have never given up on me. My prayer is that I may turn to you, make ready and do your bidding.



IN YOUR KINDNESS

Reflecting on the kindness and generosity of the Lord, the “Compassionate One,” through prayer can be nothing short of transformative. As we make a concerted effort during Lent to practice a more focused prayer life, we do so with a desire to know God more intimately. We honor Jesus, suffer with him and celebrate his triumph over sin and death. Allow the short but substantive prayers in this little booklet to enrich you and accompany you from Ash Wednesday to the empty tomb.

This book, along with many other
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