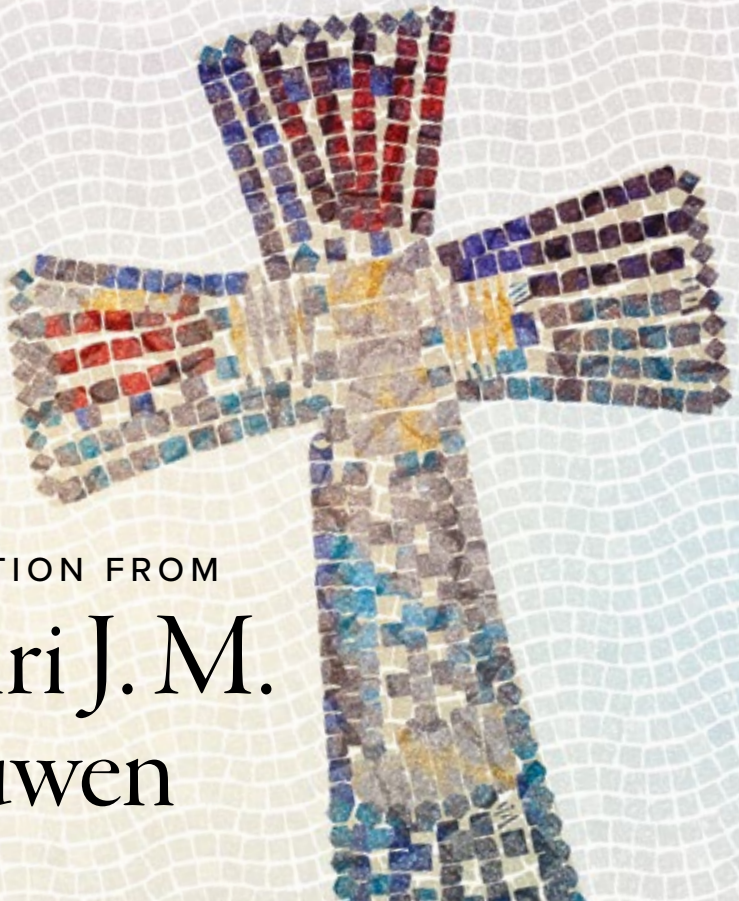


DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR LENT

The WAY,  
the TRUTH,  
and the LIFE



INSPIRATION FROM

Henri J. M.  
Nouwen

## ASH WEDNESDAY

# Cleanse Our Hearts

---

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.

*Psalm 51:10*

Help me to close the many doors and windows of my heart through which I flee from you or through which I give entry to words and sounds coming not from you, but from a raging, screaming world that wants to pull me away from you. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, 28)

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the only Way of life, of faith, of hope, of mercy. Cleanse our hearts to resemble your own heart, that the Holy Spirit may enter in. Amen.

## THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

# Inside and Out

---

Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.”

*Luke 11:39*

Often you will catch yourself wanting to receive your loving God by putting on a semblance of beauty, by holding back everything dirty and spoiled, by clearing just a little path that looks proper. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*, 17)

Holy God, wash me inside and out with the healing grace of your forgiveness. Cause me to love the Way of humility and focus my soul on Jesus. Amen.

## FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

# Are We There Yet?

---

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

*John 1:29*

You, dear Lord, holy, spotless, innocent Lamb, are the only one who can truly offer a sacrifice to God and so enter into the heavenly sanctuary where you want to bring me with you into the presence of your Father.

(Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, 41)

Did you ask your parents, “Are we there yet?” My kids asked that when we traveled. This third day of Lent, the answer is “no and yes.”

Generally, it is better to begin a journey knowing where you are going. Yes, Henri Nouwen points to Lent’s end—the post-resurrection Lamb of God who dwells in heaven. But in this present moment, no, we are not *there* yet.

John the Baptist said of Jesus, “The Lamb of God...takes away the sin of the world!” Jesus began with the end in mind. At the time of John’s witness, the way to the cross still lay before Jesus. Because he walked that way, *yes*, we are “there yet.” But in Lent, the Way is both ahead of us and behind us, surrounding us with love.

Holy Jesus, lead me today and always. Amen.

## SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

# Faith Trusts

---

If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

*Psalm 139:9-10*

When you are still young, you want to hold everything in your own hands, but when you have grown older and opened your hands in prayer, you are able to let yourself be led without knowing where. You know only that the freedom which God's breath has brought you will lead to new life, even if the cross is the only sign you can see. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*, 57)

One cannot always see the way ahead. One may even be uncertain about the next step, let alone the way. As Nouwen teaches us, youth are not always concerned about such things. That's good. They should not have to experience that kind of worry. Out of our *unknowing* seasons, we may still pray for the young. We ask for the Lord's comforting, personal presence to them.

Why can we pray this way, even when we are uncertain about our way? Because even then, we are children of faith. Faith knows. Faith trusts. If God waits for us at the farthest limits of the sea, he fills our lives right where we are. Faith knows. Faith trusts. Faith sees the greater reality of the *unseen things*. God is present to us in his Christ. *He is the Way*.

Holy Jesus, Way of Hope and Life, show us our daily way, especially so for the young. Amen.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

# Yes

---

Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

*Matthew 4:10*

In the lonely place Jesus finds the courage to follow God’s will and not his own; to speak God’s words and not his own; to do God’s work and not his own. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*, 14)

In yesterday’s devotion, we learned that even lonely places are filled with God’s presence. Jesus promised to be with us to the end of the age—every step of our way. Jesus’ lonely places were not random. He sought them out to pray. Even in his temptation, the Holy Spirit led him to that place and time. There was nothing random about it.

Nouwen’s single sentence above, coupled with the single sentence of our Scripture, drops us to our knees in thankful adoration. Jesus courageously affirms our faith in him. Yes, Jesus faces Satan for us. Yes, Jesus is faithful to the Father’s will for us. Yes, Jesus proclaims the Word of the Gospel for us. And yes, Jesus is doing the work of the One who sent him, for us.

Fall to your knees today, child of God, crying, “Yes!” and “Thank you!”

Holy Jesus, is “thank you” enough for your faithful love for us? Oh, yes! Thank you, Lord. Amen.

## MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

# Take My Hand

---

From the end of the earth I call to you,  
when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock  
that is higher than I,  
for you are my refuge,  
a strong tower against the enemy.

*Psalm 61:2-3*

Let me take you by the hand and lead you. Accept my love and trust that where I will bring you, the deepest desires of your heart will be fulfilled. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*, 58)

I do not remember when my children stopped holding my hand. One never knows when it is the last time. A moment comes when one realizes it does not happen anymore. It is a rite of passage, unmarked by the kids, but noted with some wistfulness by the parents, albeit in hindsight.

Today's Scripture and the Nouwen quote are perfectly matched, aren't they? "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I" and "Let me take you by the hand and lead you." In the first, we speak with longing need to our God. In the latter, the Lord answers with his eternal invitation.

What are the deepest desires of the heart? They are the human longing to find our rest in the Lord. We are truly at rest when we are basking in the eternal Sabbath of the Father's heart. His heart has room, room for all. Take his hand again today. And experience peace, safety, fulfillment.

Jesus, Rock, please take my hand. You are the Rest that I need. Amen.

## TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

# Look in the Pantry

---

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are.

1 John 3:1

By following this way—the way of love, the way of peace, the way of the cross—we become God’s children. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Peacework*, 95)

Do you ever unpack your groceries and put something in the pantry only to discover you already have it? I do. Lent can be like that. We struggle to find the Way to God’s heart through our sinfulness, hubris and ego. We long to be children of God, but Lent leads us to see that what we want to be, we already are: “...that we should be called children of God, and *that is what we are.*”

Jesus traveled the way of love, the way of peace, the way of the cross for us. Now, in the discipline of Lent, we follow him on that Way. On the Way, we become more and more what God has made us—his children. That is the Way it is as the Holy Spirit works to build within us faithfulness, integrity, authenticity, gratitude to God and discipleship. We grow more and more into the mind and will of Christ. God’s Son places our feet on his Way of being children of God.

Holy Spirit, teach me to look in the spiritual pantry in my soul and discover that I am already a child of God. Amen.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Henri Nouwen was one of the most innovative and influential spiritual writers of the past century. His vision of spirituality was broad and inclusive, and his compassion embraced all of humankind. Nouwen wrote 39 books on spirituality and the spiritual life that have sold millions of copies and been translated into over 30 languages. The passages quoted in this booklet are taken from certain of his published works, listed here, all of which are available through [www.henrinouwen.org](http://www.henrinouwen.org).

*Behold the Beauty of the Lord* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 1987, 2007 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Used with permission of the publisher, Ave Maria Press®, Inc., P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556, [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com).

*Can You Drink the Cup?* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 1989, 2007 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Used with permission of the publisher, Ave Maria Press®, Inc., P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556, [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com).

*Community* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 2021 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Reprinted by permission of Orbis Books. All rights reserved.

*Heart Speaks to Heart* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 1989, 2007 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Used with permission of the publisher, Ave Maria Press®, Inc., P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556, [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com).

*Out of Solitude* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 1974, 2004 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Used with permission of the publisher, Ave Maria Press®, Inc., P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556, [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com).

*Peacework: Prayer, Resistance, Community* by Henri J. M. Nouwen, foreword by John Dear. Copyright © 2005 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Reprinted by permission of Orbis Books. All rights reserved.

*The Selfless Way of Christ: Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 2012 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Reprinted by permission of Orbis Books. All rights reserved.

*With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 1994 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Reprinted by permission of Orbis Books. All rights reserved.

*With Open Hands* by Henri J. M. Nouwen. Copyright © 1972, 1995, 2005 by The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust. Used with permission of the publisher, Ave Maria Press®, Inc., P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556, [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com).

Unless otherwise noted (or in excerpted text), Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition*, Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Reflections and prayers by Don Schatz. Design by Jamie Wyatt. Cover image: Adobe Stock. © 2025 The Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust ([www.henrinouwen.org](http://www.henrinouwen.org)) and Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

