



Leaning into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Ash Wednesday
February 10, 2016

Lent 2001

The cosmos dreams in me
while I wait in stillness,
ready to lean a little further
into the heart of the Holy.

I, a little blip of life,
a wisp of unassuming love,
a quickly passing breeze,
come once more into Lent.

No need to sign me
with the black bleeding ash
of palms, fried and baked.
I know my humus place.

This Lent I will sail
on the graced wings of desire,
yearning to go deeper
to the place where
I am one in the One.

Oh, may I go there soon,
in the same breath
that takes me to the stars
when the cosmos dreams in me.

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In her compilation of Lenten devotional materials titled, *Ecce Homo: Poems for Lent and Holy Week*, Karen A. Keely adds the following note to this poem, “‘Humus’—black or brown organic substance, consisting of partially or wholly decayed vegetable or animal matter; provides nutrients for plant life. The word ‘humility’ comes from the same Latin root as does ‘humus.’”

Humility. Perhaps no other word better describes the lenten experience. Humility means that we acknowledge our humanity in the divine presence of God. Humility understands that while we are the crowning glory of creation, we still need the love of God to be complete. Humility cherishes the fact that God our Creator allows us to “lean a little further into the heart of the Holy,” learning from the One who loves us more than any other. Humility recognizes that even the “decaying” aspects of our lives are rich with the possibilities of new growth. May the ashes which smudge our brows on this Wednesday be for us a hopeful sign of the life God dreams for us all.

Jody Wright

Prayer

Strong and Gentle God, in this hour there is a place for me to sit and claim the love you hold out for me. There is a moment, a quiet space for me to know that there is nothing that can come between me and the overwhelming reality of your love. And though I get tired, frustrated, and angry, though the world grabs me and pulls me along in its frenzied whirling way, I know that here and now, you are with me. Touch me. Heal me. Hold me in the arms of your compassion, and renew me with the breath of your Spirit. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Schuyler Rhodes, *Words to the Silence: A Book of Uncommon Prayer*

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

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

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you have no delight in sacrifice;

if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”