



# *Leaning into the Heart of the Holy*

*2016 Lenten Devotions*

**Monday of Holy Week**

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## ***Leaning on a Christian Example***

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It has been 20 years now since my grandfather died of an unexpected heart attack. He was a wonderful man, one that I looked up to since he was the closest thing I had to a father figure in my life. This man that I absolutely adored had all of the attributes of what God had in mind when he created us. My grandfather was loving, caring, loyal, obedient, committed to his family, and one that would give a stranger the shirt off his back.

But of all his qualities, there was one that really stuck out to me the most. His devotion to God was second to none among anyone I knew. So much so that his friends gave him the nickname Peter, as he loved to fish and they deemed him a saint. Now they could have picked from a hundred other nicknames– Captain, Gordon, Ahab, Skipper to name a few. But they saw in him what I saw: Jesus' right-hand man and arguably the most influential Apostle. Even if he knew your name he would call you brother. He saw us all as brothers and sisters of Christ, and treated everyone in that manner regardless of their race, religion, social and economic backgrounds.

During the summers when I was a young lad, until I finished high school, I spent a great deal of time with him at his cabin in the beautiful Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. Since I was young, I didn't understand on Saturday evenings why I had to get out of the lake to get cleaned up for Saturday evening mass. The closest church was 20 miles away, but if there was a service to partake in, we were there. I also remember watching pre-season NFL games with him and seeing all of the John 3:16 banners waving in the background. Coming from a home where my parents did not attend church, I had no idea what they meant. Why would people continually predict the score to be 16-3, I thought? Or maybe it referenced keeping one's faith in miracles, as my grandfather always said back then that it would take one for the Giants to win. So I finally just asked him and received the normal response of an elder that was being interrogated about one of life's mysteries. "Go look it up," he said.

What a powerful verse! Again, being young I didn't understand the magnitude of the sacrifice God had made for us or what exactly eternal life meant. I guess I was about 12, so when you are little, you think life will go on forever. But as I got older, my grandfather's influence helped me become a believer. After his death I wanted to carry on his Christian legacy with the same devotion and faithfulness he displayed. I also vowed to be a good Christian example to others just as my grandfather was to me, in hopes they too would want to see what John 3:16 and being a good Christian is all about.

So one day my journey on earth will come to an end. I will be leaning on the rails of the escalator to the Heavens, and don't doubt that my grandfather will be leaning on the pearly gates as the first in line to greet me. Amen, brother.

### **Prayer:**

God of love,  
My prayer is simple:  
Your son Jesus suffered and died for me.  
I know only  
that I cannot have real strength  
unless I rely on you.  
I cannot feel protected  
from my many weaknesses  
until I turn to you  
for forgiveness and your unalterable love.  
Help me to share this  
strength, protection, and love with others. Amen.

*From Praying Lent: An Online Ministry of Creighton University*

### **John 3:16**

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

### **Isaiah 42:1-9**

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.  
He will not cry or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;  
a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;

he will faithfully bring forth justice.  
He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:  
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to the nations,  
to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.  
I am the Lord, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.  
See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.