



# *Leaning Into the Heart of the Holy*

*2016 Lenten Devotions*

Thursday

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As we approached this season of Lent and Ash Wednesday, my thoughts turned to where I was a year ago. After feeling God's call to go on a mission trip, I finally stepped out in faith to go last year. I was anxious and nervous since I didn't know what to expect nor did I know very many people who were going, and the ones I did know I didn't know very well. For this very introverted person this was indeed a leap of faith!!!

On February 13, 2015, thirty-eight of us traveled to Leon, Nicaragua, to serve for a week in the poorest area I have ever seen. I soon found out that these people may be poor by our standards but they were very rich in their heritage, their faith, and their love for family. I was blessed every day by these humble and gracious people. But the most meaningful day of the trip was on Ash Wednesday when we all gathered on the beach for an Ash Wednesday service and baptized one of the local interpreters who had spent the week with us. It was a moment I will never forget as we experienced God's presence, grace, and love as we stood together with fellow team members and the staff from El Ayudante as the sun set over the Pacific Ocean. That Ash Wednesday will forever be etched in my heart.

This year, I attended the Ash Wednesday service at Lakeside, but I still hold my experience from last year in my mind and heart as I prepare to return to Nicaragua on Saturday, and I thank God for giving me the courage to step out in faith to follow his calling.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. "

Matthew 25:35

**Prayer:**

Lord, let everything I do this day and in this season of Lent come from you, be inspired by you. I long to be closer to you. Help me to remember that nothing is important in my life unless it glorifies you in some way. It's so easy to get caught up in the day to day of my life and keep saying, "Tomorrow, I will spend more time in prayer," but now my longing meets your love and I want to do it now. Help me to rely on you for help. Your word asks you that I reach perfection. Please, Lord, remind me that "perfection" isn't the crazy, "successful" way I try to live my life, but a perfection of my most authentic, real self. My "perfection" might be holding my many flaws in my open hands, asking you to help me accept them. Heal me, Lord, and help me to find you in the darkness of my life. Let me reach out in this darkness and feel your hand and love there to guide me.

(Adapted from Praying Lent: An Online Ministry of Creighton University)

**Luke 4: 1-15:**

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.