



# Leaning Into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Wednesday

March 9, 2016

"God sometimes seems to speak to us most intimately when He catches us, as it were, off our guard. Our preparations to receive Him sometimes have the opposite effect."

C.S. Lewis, from *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*

In his homily at Casa Santa Marta, Pope Francis explained that God always surprises. The Pope asked Christians if they let God surprise them or if they are closed just like the doctors of the Law were during Jesus' time. (October 2014)

"Why were these Doctors of the Law unable to understand the signs of the times? Why did they demand an extraordinary sign (which Jesus later gave to them), why they did not understand? First of all, because they were closed. They were closed within their system, they had perfectly systemized the law, it was a masterpiece. Every Jew knew what they could do and what they could not do, how far they could go. It was all systemized. And they were safe there.

"They did not understand that God is the God of surprises, that God is always new; He never denies himself, never says that what He said was wrong, never, but He always surprises us. They did not understand this and they closed themselves within that system that was created with the best of intentions and asked Jesus: 'But, give us a sign'. And they did not understand the many signs that Jesus did give them and which indicated that the time was ripe. Second, they had forgotten that they were a people on a journey, on a path. And when we set out on a journey, when we are on our path, we always encounter new things, things we did not know.

"And this should make us think: am I attached to my things, my ideas, [are they] closed? Or am I open to God's surprises? Am I at a standstill or am I on a journey? Do I believe in Jesus Christ - in Jesus, in what he did: He died, rose again and the story ended there - Do I think that the journey continues toward maturity, toward the manifestation of the glory of the Lord? Am I able to understand the signs of the times and be faithful to the voice of the Lord that is manifested in them? We should ask ourselves these questions today and ask the Lord for a heart that loves the law - because the law belongs to God - but which also loves God's surprises and the ability to understand that this holy law is not an end in itself."

## **Prayer:**

May the God of Surprises delight you, inviting you to accept gifts not yet imagined.  
May the God of Transformation call you, opening you to continual renewal.  
May the God of Justice confront you, daring you to see the world through God's eyes.  
May the God of Abundance affirm you, nudging you toward deeper trust.  
May the God of Embrace hold you, encircling you in the hearth of God's home.  
May the God of Hopefulness bless you, encouraging you with the fruits of faith.  
May the God of Welcoming invite you, drawing you nearer to the fullness of God's  
expression in you.  
May God Who is Present be with you, awakening you to God in all things, all people,  
and all moments.  
May God be with you. Amen.

—Elizabeth Eiland Figueroa

## **Isaiah 43:1-7, 16-21**

But now thus says the Lord,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.  
For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.  
I give Egypt as your ransom,  
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.  
Because you are precious in my sight,  
and honored, and I love you,  
I give people in return for you,  
nations in exchange for your life.  
Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you;  
I will say to the north, "Give them up,"  
and to the south, "Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from far away  
and my daughters from the end of the earth—

everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.”

I am the Lord, your Holy One,  
the Creator of Israel, your King.  
Thus says the Lord,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
who brings out chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
The wild animals will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.