

February 25, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

# *Daily Reflections*

JOURNEYING THROUGH LENT

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## REMOVE FROM YOUR MIDST OPPRESSION

By Sister Christine Hilliard, CSJ

### Today's Reading

*Thus says the LORD: If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; Then the LORD will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; "Repairer of the breach," they shall call you, "Restorer of ruined homesteads."*

*If you hold back your foot on the sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the sabbath a delight, and the LORD's holy day honorable; If you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice—Then you shall delight in the LORD, and I*

*will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

**ISAIAH 58:9b-14**

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## Reflection

Isaiah 58 continues the message from yesterday's reading: when the people of Judah become a community based on compassion and justice extending to all, then their own post-exile restoration will be evident. Until then, Judah can expect divine judgment on them as an oppressive and uncaring people. It is a just and kind society that God honors with Divine Presence.

After their return from the Babylonian exile, observance of the Sabbath became an important form of Jewish self-identity. It came to signify not simply a day of rest; it also became a symbol of commitment to Judah's ancestral religion. Isaiah suggests that if they neglect the Sabbath, they are rejecting their identity as the people of God. So the observance of the Sabbath is an essential part of the community's restoration after their experience of the exile. It, too, is a time NOT to seek one's own interests nor to speak with hatred:

*If you hold back your foot on the sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the sabbath a delight, and the LORD's holy day honorable; If you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice—Then you shall delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father.*

It is clear that Isaiah sees the restoration of Judah dependent on the people's behavior toward their own community members as well as others. In that way they are active participants in their own restoration, their own return to wholeness and identification as the people of God.





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## For Pondering

- What part of Isaiah's message makes sense to you today?
- What activities/behaviors are identification signs for your relationship with God? Your faith community participation? Your treatment of strangers?
- The title of this reflection is "REMOVE FROM YOUR MIDST OPPRESSION." What oppression do you desire to be removed? What might you do to help remove it?

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## Closing Prayer

*Creator God, may I participate in restoring and renewing all that is broken in the world. Strengthen your compassion in me, nurture in me the justice that you desire for the world. I need you to teach me how to honor myself without setting myself above and apart from others. May I be one with you . . . with all you have created, thus helping to eliminate oppression. Amen.*

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Center for Spiritual Development | 434 A South Batavia Street, Orange, CA 92868 (714) 744-3175

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