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Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

WHOLEHEARTED RETURN

By Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ

The Verse Before Today's Gospel

*Even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart.*

JOEL 2:12-13

Reflection

Lent is a sacred journey on which we embark every year. It is good to pause for these Forty Days to more intentionally engage our relationship with The Divine. I ask myself, what does it mean to “*return*” and to *return with my whole heart*?

Jonah 3:1-10 gives me a BIG hint! As human beings we often wander off the true path of God, and sometimes relationships are strained, both with people we love and those within the social fabric of our times. Jonah was sent to the

people of Nineveh to point out their wayward ways and challenge them to return to God and the ways of God; Lent offers us the same opportunity to re-examine our attitudes and behaviors. How do my ways mirror or distract from God's presence of love, compassion, care for others, mercy and forgiveness?

Much of **Psalm 51** speaks of the way to return to the truth of God's ways of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Sometimes there is a need to assess my intentions and behavior; and, recognizing harm, I must contritely seek forgiveness. In speaking about forgiveness, St. Teresa of Avila once said, "*The first to apologize is the bravest. The first to forgive is the strongest. And the first to forget is the happiest.*"

God's mercy is always available. I have learned to trust that "*a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.*" I am drawn to examine not just my behaviors in light of God's great love and desire for us, but also to attend to my unconscious attitude toward the needs of the dear neighbor.

If I know myself as one intending to be centered in God, then knowing God's heart of love for all, seeing them as my brothers and sisters, is important. I strive to live from an attitude of inclusion, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. My ego needs sometimes get in the way, as do political positions that ignore the mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves. Lenten return to God's ways is found in the economy of compassion and mercy that far outweigh the economy of wealth, power, control, and possessions.

Lenten return with all my heart requires careful consideration and pondering of all in which I participate every day. Seeing with God's eyes and heart is challenging indeed! May the pilgrimage through Lent clarify my vision, my intention, and my behavior in all aspects of my life.



Photo by Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ

For Pondering

- Who is God for me? To whom do I pray? Whom do I seek to emulate?
- What needs to shift in me to align my thinking, and actions with those of God's desire?

- What does return to God mean to me? What is the cost?
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For Prayer

Fill me with your openness.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your truth.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your zeal.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your faith.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your trust.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your love.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your joy.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your peace.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with your compassion.

Jesus, fill me.

Fill me with yourself.

Jesus, fill me.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart,

Make my heart like your own.

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