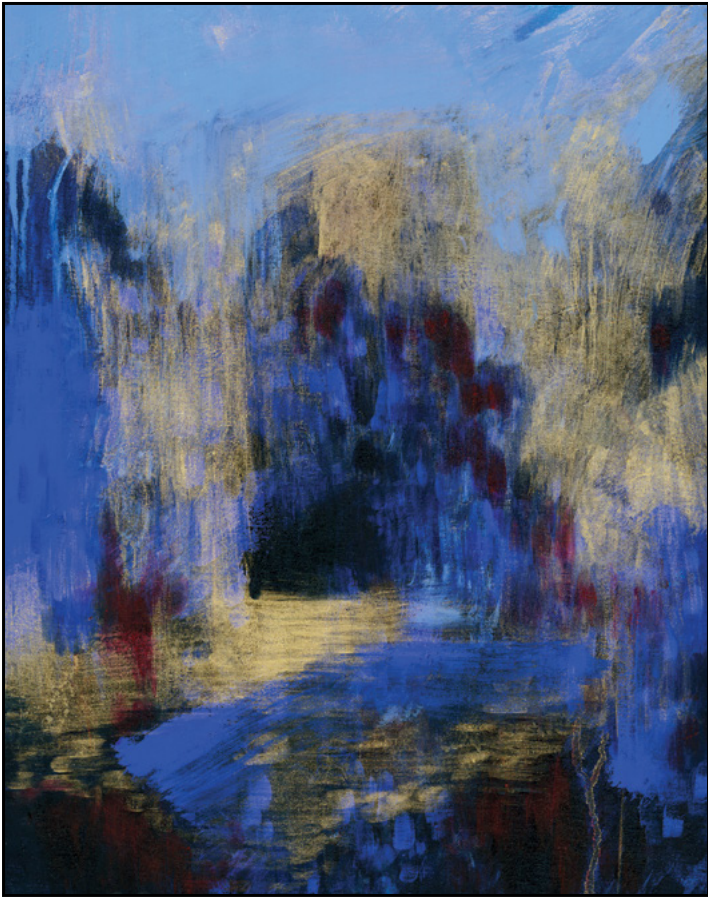


Oh, That We May Know the Lord

A Lent Devotional



CHURCH OF THE
SAVIOR

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INTRODUCTION

“Oh, that we might know the Lord!” This exclamation from the prophet Hosea guides our journey through Lent this year. Lent is a time of preparation and a season of contemplation, and Hosea’s words invite us to grow in our knowledge of God and in our knowledge that we are fully known and completely loved by God. Because as finite humans we can never fully know God, every time we respond to the invitation to know God, God can delight or comfort or challenge us anew.

The following devotions are divided into six sections, one for the week of Ash Wednesday and five more for each week in Lent. Each section begins with an invitation to **prepare** your mind, heart and body to know God, then continues by asking you to **notice** God at work in and around you, either now or in the past. The sections conclude with a prompt for **reflecting** on what it means for you to know God. You will find a mix of scripture, visual art, poetry, essays, and spiritual exercises in the sections, providing you with a variety of ways to know God.

Much of the art and scripture and many of the exercises have been suggested by Savior members, as you will find noted in each section. I am grateful for everyone who shared something that helps them to know God and I am excited to share their wisdom with the Savior community.

Finally, as you engage with the discipline of knowing God this Lent, Father Kevin provides this helpful reminder from Michael Casey:

It is good that we practice self-denial and give time to prayer, but this is no excuse for ignoring appropriate care of our health, maintenance of relationships, the obligation of work, and the prudent allocation of time for recuperation from our efforts. Spirituality should never be allowed to become a tyranny, binding us evermore slavishly to particular practices. On the contrary, spiritual progress is habitually signaled by a growth in freedom, in a certain lightness of being, and in simple, uncomplicated happiness.

The Road to Eternal Life, p. 82.

May this season of Lent draw you closer to God as you increase in your knowledge of God and grow in faith, hope and love.

—Sarah Lindsay

Week of Ash Wednesday



PREPARE

Read Hosea 6:1-6, printed below. Read the verses slowly, and more than once, allowing the words to soak into your mind and heart. What do you notice as you read? What words or images stand out?

¹ “Come, let us return to the Lord.

He has torn us to pieces;
now he will heal us.

He has injured us;
now he will bandage our wounds.

² In just a short time he will restore us,
so that we may live in his presence.

³ Oh, that we might know the Lord!
Let us press on to know him.

He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn
or the coming of rains in early spring.”

⁴ “O Israel and Judah,
what should I do with you?” asks the Lord.

“For your love vanishes like the morning mist
and disappears like dew in the sunlight.

⁵ I sent my prophets to cut you to pieces—
to slaughter you with my words,
with judgments as inescapable as light.

⁶ I want you to show love,
not offer sacrifices.

I want you to know me
more than I want burnt offerings.

[Listen](#) to a selection of songs on the theme of knowing God, compiled by Savior member Ted Olsen.

NOTICE

Read this excerpt from The Life of the Beloved by Henri Nouwen and meditate on the truth that we are fully known and fully loved by God.

We are the Beloved. We are intimately loved long before our parents, teachers, spouses, children, and friends loved or wounded us. That's the truth of our lives. That's the truth I want you to claim for yourself. That's the truth spoken by the voice that says, "You are my Beloved."

Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: "I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted you together in your mother's womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest, I keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench all your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you as my own. You belong to me." . . .

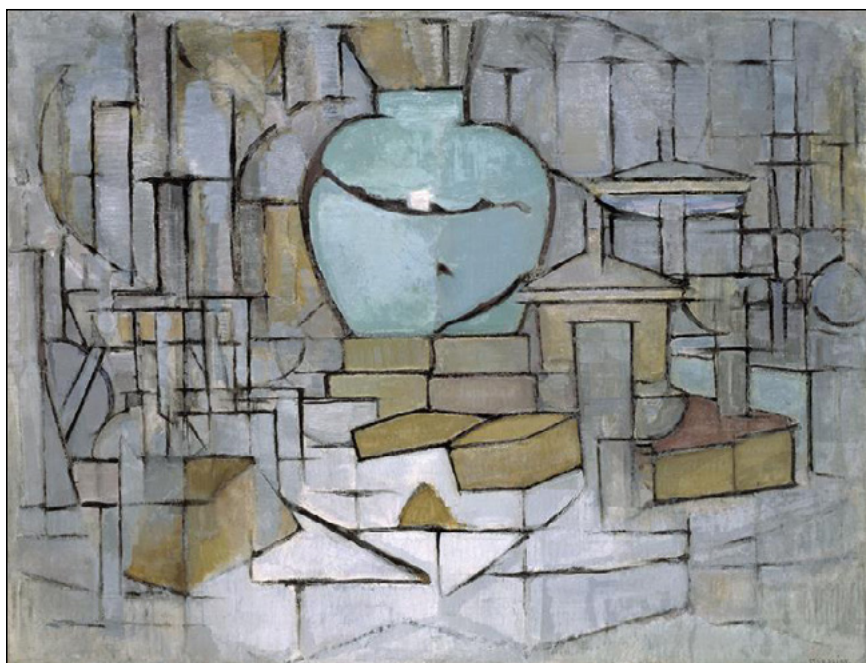
Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply. It is like discovering a well in the desert. Once you have touched wet ground, you want to dig deeper.

Andrei Rublev, *Trinity*, between 1408 and 1427.

Hosea 6:1-6 taken from *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2012), 36-37.

First Week of Lent



PREPARE

Read Psalm 100. Steve Dille (Savior's Youth Pastor) explains how this psalm helps us prepare our hearts to know God: "The psalmist reminds me of the importance of gratitude — 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving.' I have found that gratitude provides a way for me to notice God at work around me. Each night before I go to sleep, I review from the day what I'm thankful for. This practice helps me treat God less as a means to an end and, instead, more as a Person who is to be enjoyed."

As you read the psalm, consider: what might you thank God for? Spend some time bringing your thanksgivings to God.

¹ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

² Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

³ Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵ For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

NOTICE

Read this excerpt from Cole Arthur Riley's new book, This Here Flesh. In this section, Riley meditates on the way that objects can help solidify our memories, especially our memories of how God has worked in our lives or in the lives of our families and communities.

For those of us who are trying to carry all our memories on our own and pass them clumsily from one to another, we must learn to create our own artifacts, sacred items of story and existence that have once been denied to us.

An artifact is a little piece of defiance. To say, *I was here. I existed, and this thing happened, whether you believe it or not. This cap right here. Feel the brim.*

This is a form of liberation – to be able to carry your own memories as you choose, to own them.

The Bible says Samuel erected a large stone so everyone would remember that God had protected them. He named it *Ebenezer*, which means “stone of help.” And every time someone would walk past it, it was a reminder that God was for them, that God had protected them and would come to their help.

It's not the only time. God tells Joshua to set up stones of remembrance to mark the time when the Jordan River stopped its flow so that they could get across it. The Bible says the whole nation crossed and not one foot got wet. Joshua tells them that when their children ask what the stones mean, they must always stop and tell them the story.

I wish I could build an Ebenezer in Inwood Park. Or one step off Cemetery Lane. Reminders of all the stories that made me. Maybe in the apple grove next to my sinking barn, in remembrance of a home lost, now found. When my children pass it, they'll ask me, *What are these stones all about?* And we'll sit there, dodging falling apples as I tell them how God once held up the whole sky for me. And I'll watch them eat the fruit that no one will ever take from us.”

REFLECT

Remember a time when you noticed God at work in your life, in your family, or in your community. Is there an artifact connected to that memory? If not, choose something to be an *ebenezer* for this memory: perhaps a small stone, like Samuel and Joshua choose, or another small object that can hold this memory.

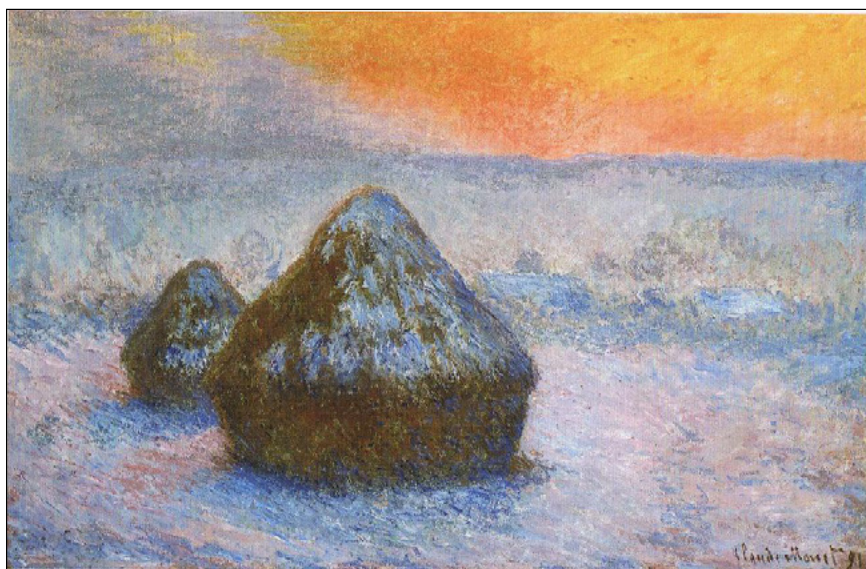
Once you have an artifact connected to the memory, put it somewhere visible for the rest of Lent. When you see it, remember how God met you; when someone asks about it, share the story. Use this artifact to help you know that God was with you and will continue to be with you.

Piet Mondrian, *Still Life with Gingerpot 2*, 1912.

Psalm 100 taken from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh* (New York, Convergent: 2022), p. 178.

Second Week of Lent



PREPARE

Read the poem below slowly and meditatively.

To Live in the Mercy of God

To lie back under the tallest
oldest trees. How far the stems
rise, rise
 before ribs of shelter
 open!

To live in the mercy of God. The complete
sentence too adequate, has no give.
Awe, not comfort. Stone, elbows of
stony wood beneath lenient
moss bed.

And awe suddenly
passing beyond itself. Becomes
a form of comfort.
 Becomes the steady
air you glide on, arms
stretched like the wings of flying foxes.
To hear the multiple silence
of trees, the rainy
forest depths of their listening.

To float, upheld,
 as salt water
 would hold you,
 once you dared.

NOTICE

Levertov's poem points us towards the ways in which we can experience and know God in nature. What does nature tell you about God? How do you experience God in nature? If you can, take a walk or sit by a window for a while to observe nature.

Claude Monet, *Stacks of Wheat (Sunset, Snow Effect)*, 1891.

Psalm 19 taken from Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

REFLECT

Read Psalm 19, using the steps of lectio divina: quiet your mind and heart to enter into God's presence. Read the passage slowly, paying attention to the words or images that capture your mind. Hear what God is saying to you. Read the passage again, listening to God's invitation to you and pondering the words in your heart. Respond to God with the thoughts and feelings that have arisen in your reading. Finally, wait in the presence of God, allowing the words of the scripture to sink into your soul.

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³ They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Third Week of Lent



PREPARE

Listen to J.S. Bach, [“Christ Lag in Todesbanden”](#) (“Christ Lay in Death’s Bonds”), conducted by John Elliot Gardner.

John Rakes, Savior’s Pastor of Music and Worship, writes: “One way that I know the Lord is through studying music. One piece of music that I find as a constant source of insight into the totality of the Lord’s deliverance is this J.S. Bach cantata. Bach’s masterful treatment of the chorale text by Martin Luther illuminates in great detail an awe-inspiring meditation on the completeness of Christ’s work on the cross.”

As you listen to the music, pay attention to how it gives you a fresh perspective on who God is.

Rembrandt van Rijn, *Woman Reading*, seventeenth century.

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982), p. 76-8.

NOTICE

In the following passage, author A.W. Tozer encourages us to expect that we will hear — will notice — the voice of God as we read scripture.

It is important that we get still to wait on God. And it is best that we get alone, preferably with our Bible outspread before us. Then if we will we may draw near to God and begin to hear Him speak to us in our hearts. I think for the average person the progression will be something like this: First a sound as of a Presence walking in the garden. Then a voice, more intelligible, but still far from clear. Then the happy moment when the Spirit begins to illuminate the Scriptures, and that which had been only a sound, or at best a voice, now becomes an intelligible word, warm and intimate and clear as the word of a dear friend. Then will come life and light, and best of all, ability to see and rest in and embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and All.

The Bible will never be a living Book to us until we are convinced that God is articulate in His universe. To jump from a dead, impersonal world to a dogmatic Bible is too much for most people. They may admit that they should accept the Bible as the Word of God, and they may try to think of it as such, but they find it impossible to believe that the words there on the page are actually for them. A man may say, "These words are addressed to me," and yet in his heart not feel and know that they are. He is the victim of a divided psychology. He tries to think of God as mute everywhere else and vocal only in a book.

I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever. Now we read the book as the record of what God said when He was for a brief time in a speaking mood. With notions like that in our heads how can we believe? The facts are that God is not silent, has never been silent. It is the nature of God to speak. The second Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Word. The Bible is the inevitable outcome of God's continuous speech. It is the infallible declaration of His mind for us put into our familiar human words.

I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is now speaking. The prophets habitually said, "Thus saith the Lord." They meant their hearers to understand that God's speaking is in the continuous present. We may use the past tense properly to indicate that at a certain time a certain word of God was spoken, but a word of God once spoken continues to be spoken, as a child once born continues to be alive, or a world once created continues to exist. And those are but imperfect illustrations, for children die and worlds burn out, but the Word of our God endureth forever.

If you would follow on to know the Lord, come at once to the open Bible expecting it to speak to you. Do not come with the notion that it is a thing which you may push around at your convenience. It is more than a thing, it is a voice, a word, the very Word of the living God.

REFLECT

As you notice how you know God through scripture, take some time to remember how God has met you through scripture in the past. Savior member Hope Grant describes how she practices this form of noticing and reflecting: “The Daily Lectionary Readings help me reflect on what it means to know God. A practice I have embraced for the past 36 years is to use my Book of Common Prayer (the same one, even as it is falling apart) as a diary to recall my encounters with God in his Word. Using the ‘Daily Devotionals for Individuals’ I work through the Lectionary readings and note (especially in the Psalms) the date and event when a specific passage touched me in a special way. Years later as I re-read those Psalms and my notations, I am filled with deep gratitude and humility as I am reminded of God’s faithfulness throughout the many and diverse seasons of my life and to keep looking to him as I face the future.”

Choose a familiar passage of scripture, or return to Hosea 6:1-6, and spend time re-reading it. What do you remember about what you noticed when you last read this scripture? What stands out to you now?

Fourth Week of Lent



Leung

PREPARE

As you prepare your heart to know God today, you will practice a simple form of kinetic, or moving, prayer: hands down, hands up prayer.

Begin by sitting in a comfortable place.

Hands down: turn your hands palm down and release any worries or preoccupations you currently carry.

Hands up: turn your hands palm up and invite God to be present with you in your time today.

Hands down: let go of any fear or anxiety about your ability to know God. Recall the words of Hosea 6: “He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn.”

Hands up: receive the invitation to know God in your day today.

Hands down: turn your day over to the God who knows and loves you.

Hands up: accept the knowledge that you are beloved.

NOTICE

Read Philippians 3:7-8 in a variety of translations. Read slowly and pay attention to what stands out as you read these verses. Mother Linda Richardson, one of Savior's founding priests, describes how a new translation of these verses led her into a deeper knowledge of God: "Many years ago I discovered the Amplified Bible's translation of these well-known verses. I memorized them and now, years later, reflect on them frequently as I continue the journey toward knowing God more deeply."

Philippians 3:7-8, Amplified Bible:

⁷ But whatever former things I had that might have been gains to me, I have come to consider as [one combined] loss for Christ's sake. ⁸ Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly].

Philippians 3:7-8, NIV:

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:7-8, NLT

⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

REFLECT

In order to reflect on Paul's words in Philippians, illustrate Philippians 3:7-8. Your illustration can be as simple as writing a few words from the verse with colored pens or as involved as pulling out paints and brushes. The idea is to sit with the passage and engage it with your senses in order to translate it from words to images. Savior's Pastor of Family Ministry, Mary Gonzalez, has found in this exercise new ways of approaching and knowing God.

Lauren Wright Pittman, *Invited In*, © A Sanctified Art (sanctifiedart.org)

Philippians 3:7-8 taken from: The Amplified Bible, Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 90631. All rights reserved; Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide; and *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Fifth Week of Lent

PREPARE

Spend time meditating on this piece of art by Louise Fishman, titled Iron Sharpens Iron (submitted by Brad Lindsay, a deacon at Savior).



NOTICE

Read these two poems from Savior member Cara Peterson, who writes: "I love the invitations of Lent. Here are two (non-Lenten) poems that get at invitation a bit. Invitation to start where I am. Sitting with God. Sharing darkness, sharing light. Invitation to be attentive and gently amazed."

The Lord Sits With Me Out In Front

The Lord sits with me out in front watching
a sweet darkness begin in the fields.
We try to decide whether I am lonely.
I tell about waking at four a.m. and thinking
of what the man did to the daughter of Louise.
And there being no moon when I went outside.
He says maybe I am getting old.
That being poor is taking too much out of me.
I say I am fine. He asks for the Brahms.
We watch the sea fade. The tape finishes again
and we sit on. Unable to find words.

— *Jack Gilbert*

Whale Day

Today I was awakened by strong coffee
and the awareness that the earth is busy with whales
even though we can't see any
unless we have embarked on a whale watch,
which would be disappointing if we still couldn't see any.

I can see the steam rising from my yellow cup,
the usual furniture scattered about,
and even some early light filtering through the palms.

Meanwhile, thousands of whales are cruising
along at various speeds under the seas,

crisscrossing one another, slaloming in and out
of the Gulf Stream, some with their calves
traveling alongside — such big blunt heads they have!

So is it too much to ask that one day a year
be set aside for keeping in mind
while we step onto a bus, consume a ham sandwich,
or stoop to pick up a coin from a sidewalk

the multitude of these mammoth creatures
coasting between the continents,
some for the fun of it, others purposeful in their journeys,

all concealed under the sea, unless somewhere
one breaks the surface
with an astonishing upheaval of water
and all the people in yellow slickers
rush to one side of the boat to point and shout
and wonder how to tell their friends about the day they saw a whale?

— *Billy Collins*

REFLECT

Read John 14:1-27 and imaginatively enter the text: take the time to build the scene in your mind and hear Jesus and his disciples speaking. How do Jesus' words resonate with you, near the end of your journey through this season of Lent? What invitations or promises about knowing God do you want to carry with you into Holy Week, as you walk alongside Jesus in his death and resurrection?

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹ Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—
¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Lauren Wright Pittman, *Pouring of the Spirit*, © A Sanctified Art (sanctifiedart.org)

Louise Fishman, *Iron Sharpens Iron*, 1993.

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