

40 DAYS

**LET GO,
LET GOD**

Lent 2024

A close-up photograph of several white flowers with bright yellow centers, set against a soft, out-of-focus background of light blue and white bokeh. The flowers are in the lower half of the image, partially overlapping the text.

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Lent is often observed by giving up something we might enjoy but don't really need. Some people let go of smoking or chocolate. Unity cofounder Charles Fillmore suggested we release negative thinking during Lent. He believed the best preparation for Easter would be to clear and renew our minds with the awareness of our own divinity and inner power.

The daily messages in this year's Lenten booklet are about the aspects of our humanity that we might want to let go in order to remove blocks to our good—worry, fear, pessimism, or judgment—the unattractive qualities we know are in our way.

The seven Sunday essays written by Rev. Ellen Debenport, vice president of publishing for Unity World Headquarters, look at the many ways Jesus let go of human attributes as he learned to live purely from his divine nature. These essays include scripture citations where you can read more about the events in Jesus' ministry, creating your own Bible study on each Sunday of Lent. In every instance, Jesus was introducing us to our own spiritual identity and modeling what it looks like to live from elevated awareness.

Our hope is that you will take these weeks of Lent to release anything standing in the way of your joy and happiness so that you may experience a glorious transformation on Easter!

Your Friends in Unity

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LETTING GO AND LETTING GOD

Rev. Teresa Burton

How many times have you wrestled with a problem and been unable to see a way out? Maybe you tried various solutions, none of which came together. Maybe you ranted about the unfairness of a situation or worried whether what you were going through would ever get better. At those times, after every option was exhausted, the only thing left to do was to let go and let God.

There's such comfort in turning over the concerns of our hearts into the care and keeping of God. It makes our struggles more bearable when we trust there is a power outside ourselves who is recognizing our best efforts and forgiving us for our worst, making sure we have what we deserve and helping us get it.

But as we grow spiritually, a new awareness dawns within us. We come to understand God as the one presence and one power in the universe. We know ourselves as individuations of the Divine, uniquely expressing God's presence and power as only we can. God is principle, the presence that surrounds us but also the power that is within us.

*We come to understand God as the one presence
and one power in the universe.*

With this understanding, the idea of letting go and letting God takes on a new and deeper dimension. Even as we are fully human, we are also fully divine. We can respond to our worldly circumstances from our humanness or from our divinity. Letting go and letting God really means yielding our human efforts—our will and preferences, our struggle and effort—to the Divine within. When we do this, we avail ourselves of a new world of possibilities and potentials because we have aligned our thinking with divine mind and our feelings with divine love.

And what wonderful outcomes can spring from understanding this distinction. Surrendering our human efforts to the care and keeping of the Divine within relieves anger, worry, and anxiety. Once we're relaxed, we can better feel the presence of the Divine and the wisdom of inner guidance and intuition. From there, new opportunities present themselves, synchronicities abound, and that which seemed so difficult or even impossible resolves smoothly.

Lent Is the Perfect Time

There is no better time than the Lenten season to let go of what we're holding onto. This process of release prepares us for the glorious resurrection of Easter. But once the releasing is done, once the Christ in you is resurrected, you will go forth with a precious understanding of the power of letting go and letting God—namely, that this act of spiritual surrender is actually an act of empowerment.

It may have been tempting to think of letting go and letting God as giving up and hoping for the best. Instead, it is a supreme act of faith. It's living the awareness that there is life beyond this one, and the situations of our lives are always changing. Understanding this truth gives us agency and freedom, allowing us to choose how we will meet life.

We can learn about this transformative power from the Easter story. When we can release anything from our small irritations to our very lives, we trust life will always go on. We will survive. Jesus' triumphant overcoming is indeed our own. When Jesus cried out in his final breaths, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), he was letting go of his earthly life with the certainty that eternal life was his.

That certainty can be yours. Letting go and letting God means giving up the struggle. It means acceptance instead of resistance and peacefulness instead of anxiety. It means God is with and within you, every day of your life.

Rev. Teresa Burton is the editor of Daily Word magazine.

ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

I let go of shame.

Shame comes from believing we are not enough and are unworthy of belonging. We make mistakes and then fall into the trap of shame and guilt. The more we do this, the more we believe we are separate from God and unworthy of our divine identity. It also keeps us from fully being vulnerable and connecting with others at deeper levels.

On this first day of Lent, we can seek to heal our self-judgments and grow in our capacity for self-love. It becomes easier to release shame when we remember our own Christ nature. Yes, sometimes we miss the mark, but that does not change the Truth that we are worthy of love and belonging.

Through our spiritual practices, our faith in our wholeness and divine identity is strengthened. We show ourselves self-compassion and remember that nothing we can ever do can separate us from the love God is.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.—Romans 8:1

—Rev. Juan del Hierro

AFFIRM: I embrace my Christ nature and shower myself with compassion and love.

I let go of resentment.

Experiencing disappointment when things don't go our way or feeling indignant at having been harmed, slighted, or "wronged" comes with being human. We are not saints. Resentment, however, is holding on to the past, keeping the bitterness of old wounds present and alive, choosing not to let them go.

The word *resentment* comes from the root *re-sense* or "feel again." When we harbor negative emotions, blaming others, perhaps believing someone else deserves to suffer as we did, who actually suffers? Negative thoughts and emotions settle in to our bodies as well as our minds as resentment blocks spiritual growth and well-being.

Acceptance, prayer, and understanding the power of the mind to shape our experiences are doorways to forgiveness and healing. Cultivating a loving state of mind brings a willingness to see things differently. The willingness to let go of resentment allows God within to do the rest, healing mind, body, and soul.

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice.—Ephesians 4:31

—Rev. Lesley Miller

AFFIRM: *I let go of old grievances and allow God's love to heal my body, mind, and spirit.*

I let go of complaining.

How many of us complain to get sympathy, attention, or to avoid something we're afraid of doing? Consider the Bible story of feeding the 5,000.

"When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat'" (Mark 6:35-37).

Jesus turned the complaint back on the disciples to resolve. Now that's an inspiration we can all appreciate. The next time we catch ourselves complaining, we should ask what we can do to solve the problem rather than complain about it.

Jesus then took what the disciples found (five loaves and two fish), blessed it, and fed the people. He replaced a complaint with divinely inspired action. When we do this, we are all fed.

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.—Mark 6:34

—Rev. Bill Englehart

AFFIRM: *To complain is to extend the pain.
From this I will refrain.*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2024

I let go of sorrow.

One of the deepest pains we will ever face is the loss of loved ones, whether people or pets. We may experience a depth of sadness like no other. Most people do not know how to deal with the pain from this inevitable loss. When we go through this grief experience, we may wonder whether we can even go on or ever be the same.

Humans have learned to avoid pain, if possible. But when we are immersed in unavoidable pain, the only way out is through, and the first step is to accept the facts of the loss. Then we can let our loved ones go in love but keep our precious memories.

The life we shared with them is a part of eternal life. Our positive memories create a living legacy for them.

*I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them,
and give them gladness for sorrow.—Jeremiah 31:13*

—Rev. Suzanne Carter

*AFFIRM: I let go into the very presence of God's love
within me, and I am made whole and well and free.*

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

FEBRUARY 18, 2024



JESUS LET GO OF HUMAN EGO

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Immediately after Jesus was baptized—with a voice from heaven declaring, “This is my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17)—he was led into the wilderness to face temptation. It was the first of many opportunities during his ministry for Jesus to let go and let God—that is, to trust the divine power within him.

Temptation pitted his human desires against his spiritual nature. The 40 days of Lent traditionally represent Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and call for us to forgo some human indulgence or harmful habit.

The Devil took him to the pinnacle of the temple and goaded him to jump off and let angels catch him. Jesus said, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

After Jesus fasted for 40 days, the Devil tempted him with food. Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." The Devil took him to the pinnacle of the temple and goaded him to jump off and let angels catch him. Jesus said, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" From the top of a mountain, the Devil offered him all the kingdoms of the world in return for Jesus' worship of him. Jesus said, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" (Read the whole story in Matthew 4:1-11.)

In Unity, the Devil symbolizes mass consciousness or human thoughts adverse to divine good. Jesus' temptation was a battle within himself, with his ego and will. He was learning to forgo using his spiritual power—the same potential born in each of us—for selfish satisfaction.

Notice Jesus did not say "Get behind me, Satan" in the wilderness. He actually spoke those words to his disciple Peter years later when Jesus began to foreshadow his

suffering in Jerusalem. Peter insisted, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things'" (Matthew 16:22-23).

Jesus taught his disciples to let go of similar ego temptations in Luke 9:57-62 when a village of Samaritans refused to receive them. James and John, caught in human desire, said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" We've probably all had that feeling at times! But Jesus rebuked them and moved on.

Perhaps the most poignant story of Jesus' letting go of ego was on his final night when he washed his disciples' dusty feet (John 13:1-17). Peter was mortified. He understood Jesus' role as Messiah and refused to accept the gesture. Jesus assured Peter he would eventually understand. "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me," he said, and Peter enthusiastically relented.

For Jesus, the act of washing his disciples' feet signified their oneness, and he urged them to humbly do it for each other. "Servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."



I let go of limitation.

Release the weight of limitations that no longer serve the life you want to live. Like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, let go of self-imposed boundaries and embrace the vast sky of infinite possibilities.

Your potential is boundless, waiting for you to shed the fears that hold you back. Embrace the beauty of transformation with courage as you step into the arena of possibility. The past is a chapter already etched upon the pages of life, and the present moment is a canvas yet to be painted. Embrace the freedom from releasing doubts and moving forward into your limitless potential.

Trust in the strength already within you; it is the light cast gently upon the path toward your heart's desires. Let go and soar with the winds of change, for you are meant to thrive beyond your wildest imagination.

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
—Philippians 4:13*

—Rev. Kathy Beasley

AFFIRM: I release the weight of limitation and soar beyond every obstacle with confidence and grace.

I let go of stress.

In such an active and dynamic world, I can feel stressed, anxious, and sometimes overwhelmed. I may react to situations with stress and tension.

It is quite probable that I cannot always modify what happens outside of me, but the truth is that I can choose my reaction to external situations.

Life is not the sum of random events but a permanent and continuous offer of possibilities to grow and evolve. I can assume that stressful moments are blessed opportunities to find stillness. I take the example of Jesus, remembering the teaching of our master and guide to pray in the quiet. I imagine him wrapped in the peace of Spirit.

I too can go to my sacred inner sanctuary to regain full awareness of peace and unity. In doing so, agitation subsides, disturbing thoughts relax, emotions become calm and serene. The peace of Spirit blesses me now!

*I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also;
I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise
with the mind also.—1 Corinthians 14:15*

—Rev. Beatriz Gallerano Bell

AFFIRM: I give thanks for every opportunity to grow and evolve.

I let go of resistance.

When I push back or fight against unwanted circumstances, the effects prove the classic adage: “What I resist persists.” Rather than resisting what is unwanted, I can strive to understand the entrenched belief underlying my discontent, and I can negate that false belief.

For example, if I find I am constantly worrying about my loved one engaging in self-destructive habits, I can continue to resist or I can recognize worry as my belief about the loved one’s insufficiency. Negating their insufficiency, I can direct my thoughts instead to the Truth of their divine identity, which means they have within them all the intelligence they could ever need. I can discipline my thinking to affirm wholeness for them, which supports them and relieves me of worry.

Instead of resisting, I cultivate a healthy spiritual practice of negation, the power of elimination by which I cleanse untruthful thoughts and turn them around to focus on Truth.

Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.—Matthew 15:13

—Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett

AFFIRM: *I hold a supportive thought of truth.*

I let go of self-pity.

Some situations or circumstances disappoint us. The outcome wasn’t fair; we didn’t get what we deserved. We might feel sorry for ourselves—*why did this happen to me?*

If you feel like having a pity party, do it full tilt. Feel your emotions, cry, or even scream in a pillow. Release your feelings of self-pity. When you’re complete, take time to go into the Silence. Take some deep breaths. Allow Spirit to move into your body and mind. Ask Spirit what you are to learn from this experience. Open your heart and mind to being one with Spirit. The insight you gain will be invaluable.

The next time you feel disappointed, you might choose to observe the situation and simply accept it, not to take it personally. Rather than reacting unconsciously, we “wake up” by taking the time to respond intelligently and not to judge ourselves harshly.

It is the spirit that gives life.—John 6:63

—Rev. John Beerman

AFFIRM: *I choose to release self-pity and embrace forgiveness.*

I let go of anxiety.

Anxiety arises when we are uneasy or worried about a situation or outcome. Will the project go as we hope? Will the family gather in harmony? Will the checks arrive before the bills are due?

When we are anxious, our attention is on what we don't want or don't have. To release anxiety, we can recenter our focus in the true nature of life itself. The one power and presence is constant, always available and always accessible to each of us.

Consciously turn your awareness to the one power that is all life. Examine the goodness that is yours right now. Release the *what-ifs* and luxuriate in *what is*. Love. Joy. Prosperity. Peace. Harmony. Whenever we become distracted by *what-if*, we can center ourselves instead in present-moment awareness, in our true nature. This surety is what we can bring to all of life's inevitable ups and downs.

When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.—Psalm 94:19

—Rev. DeeAnn Weir Morency

AFFIRM: *I am centered in what is, the absolute goodness that is mine right now.*

I let go of pessimism.

Sometimes it seems as if life throws us curveballs—something we think is beyond our control, something we think we cannot change, something we feel powerless about. When this happens, it is hard to imagine positive outcomes.

What if, instead of considering this a problem, we let it be an opportunity to try something different? If the principle is true that thoughts held in mind produce after their kind, this is a great moment to test the law.

We can choose to let go of any thoughts in mind that speak from pessimism, then invite the divine presence in us to show us the gift. What if by giving up pessimism we allow an optimistic possibility to take its place? What if by giving up pessimism we can see God in action? With our mind cleared of fear and negativity, new options show up!

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.—Proverbs 3:5

—Rev. Luzette Rivera-Diez

AFFIRM: *I trust the divine mind in me to show me the blessing.*

JESUS LET GO OF OTHERS' APPROVAL

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Jesus was not a people-pleaser. He never seemed to worry what others would think of him or how they might react, even when he knew they would be displeased.

The earliest story of Jesus' letting go of approval was in childhood when he stayed behind at the temple after Passover (Luke 2:41-52). He offered no apology when his parents found him three days later. He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Later when he was teaching, healing, and surrounded by crowds, his family tried to reach him. In Mark's version, they feared Jesus was losing his mind and wanted to restrain him (Mark 3:21). In all the gospels, his reaction was the same when told his family was outside. "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:33-35).

He seemed to feel no obligation to meet others' expectations, and he taught this lesson to Martha when he visited her home. She was bustling around ensuring everyone was fed and comfortable while her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet, listening. Martha demanded that Jesus tell Mary to get up and help her. "But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:41-42).

Jesus knew people talked about him. At one point, he said he was being compared to John the Baptist, neither of them favorably. "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Luke 7:33-34)

He faced outright hostility from the scribes and Pharisees. He was feared as a zealot or revolutionary who would lead an insurrection. No doubt he was the talk of Jerusalem after he turned over tables in the temple.

Jesus was not universally loved even in his hometown of Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6). They already knew him as the son of Mary and a carpenter, and their reaction was basically, "Who does he think he is?" Jesus lamented to his disciples: "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

Later, as he prepared the disciples to go out on their own, Jesus cautioned them not to be upset if they were rejected. "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town" (Matthew 10:14). He never suggested they could please all the people all the time.

I let go of dissatisfaction.

Life has ups and downs, and it is during the down times that we often meet dissatisfaction. It drains our energy, we become weary and languish, and the satisfaction we are seeking eludes us. We seem to be separate and apart from whatever we desire. The immediate need is to let go of dissatisfaction.

The secret to letting go of dissatisfaction is in the word itself. The prefix *dis-* is understood to mean the *opposite of or not*. From the Latin *dis* means *apart*. In Truth, we are never apart from the soul-satisfying spirit of God. We are always one with God, and letting go of the *dis* leaves us with *satisfaction*.

Seeking satisfaction in outer ways can be rewarding but temporary, and the cycle of life's ups and downs continues. When we are one with the spirit of God, we are strengthened and renewed, and our satisfaction is permanent.

I will satisfy the weary, and all who are faint I will replenish.
—Jeremiah 31:25

—Rev. Ric Schumacher

AFFIRM: *I am one with the good in every needed form; satisfaction is mine.*

I let go of grudges.

At times, I have been hurt by the words or actions of others, but when I hold on to these hurts, my mind and spirit feel shackled with heavy chains. I am bound to the past, unable to live joyfully in the present.

Today I dissolve any bitterness or resentment I may have carried. With each grudge I release, I make space for love, empathy, and understanding to come into my life in surprising and amazing ways.

Each step forward is inspired by the courage to rise above the past and embrace the beautiful possibilities of the present. This act of forgiveness applies a healing balm to my wounds and inspires others to claim their freedom too. I choose to live in the present, to nurture my current relationships, and to love myself enough to let go of grudges.

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.—Ephesians 4:32

—Rev. Robin Volker

AFFIRM: *I reclaim my inner peace.*

I let go of overwhelm.

We live in a fast-paced culture that creates expectations and demands that we stay busy and productive. Whether we realize it or not, most of us create an identity and self-value that is tied to working and doing. This creates the sense that there is never enough time, so we sacrifice rest and self-care to do more, be more, and get more. As a result, we may become sick, tired, frustrated, and overwhelmed. We create a disconnect from our authentic selves.

When we turn our eyes to God within, we remember we are whole and complete and our worth is measured by what we are, not what we do. We liberate ourselves from pressure, perfectionism, paralysis, and pain. Our spiritual inheritance is to be happy and free, so we change our thinking and focus on what brings us joy, connection, and community.

Beautiful people, life is not meant to be hard.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.—Matthew 11:28

—Rev. Christina Garza

AFFIRM: *I am not the person I was conditioned to be.
I live in the wild abandon of Spirit.*

I let go of the past.

Dear one, take this moment to reflect on the following question:

Who would I be if I made the conscious choice to let go of thoughts, feelings, and memories of yesterday that no longer serve my highest good?

Perhaps your mind would be clearer and your heart more open. You would only cherish the memories that bring you joy. If you simply let go of *what was* and boldly reached for *what is*, you could stand firm in faith and finally experience the true freedom that is your birthright.

You are a worthy, blessed being, and life is waiting for you. Now is the time to accept the invitation to release the past and embrace the abundant future that lies ahead.

*All the days of my service I would wait
until my release should come.—Job 14:14*

—Veronica Walker-Douglas

AFFIRM: *I bless that which is behind me and praise
God for all that is beside me and before me.*

I let go of busyness.

It's easy to feel paralyzed with stress whenever I look at the seemingly endless list of tasks for the day. I know, however, if I take a moment to go within and connect with God, I can focus on my breath, become present to the current moment, and know that everything is in divine order.

With every inhale, the peace of God flows through me. I have the confidence to accomplish what is mine to do, I am willing to ask for support when I need help, and I know every task will be completed in the right and perfect time.

I allow myself to make necessary plans, then give my full attention to each task. As I take the time to breathe and slow down, I find the tasks I accomplish have more meaning and purpose.

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in the one body.
And be thankful.—Colossians 3:15*

—Sara Crawford

*AFFIRM: I am present to each task of the day,
knowing everything is in divine order.*

I let go of fear of illness.

Receiving an unexpected diagnosis can feel like an all-consuming experience. Life suddenly becomes defined by this experience, and it may appear that everything must succumb to addressing this condition fully.

Rather than becoming self-absorbed through fear of illness, choose to let go and be absorbed by the self, the infinite love that indwells you. You have a body; however, you are not your body. You are not your feelings, emotions, or even your mind. In Truth, you are the love that has always been flowing through you. Allow fear to dissolve into love. Allow all of it to be absorbed by the Christ of your being.

Your body serves as an avenue through which the love you are can flow into the world. Take your focus off your problems, which are just the surface layer, and remember that you are love itself expressing.

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple
of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God,
and that you are not your own?—1 Corinthians 6:19*

—Rev. Jeanmarie Eck

AFFIRM: My authentic identity is love itself.

JESUS LET GO OF WORRY

Rev. Ellen Debenport

The Bible implores us to “fear not” some 365 times, and Jesus brought the same message: Don’t worry.

Most familiar is the Sermon on the Mount, where he expounds on this idea at length. (The whole passage is Matthew 6:25-34.) “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?”

Later, in a grim passage, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the persecution of his disciples. But even then, he urges them to let events unfold. “When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11).

The key to letting go of worry, he taught, is to trust. Speaking as the Christ, which is the divine spirit within us all, Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

As Jesus said goodbye to his disciples after the Last Supper (John chapters 14-17), he repeatedly reassured them:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1).

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

“I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!” (John 16:33)

We see Jesus letting go of worry in his final week—riding into Jerusalem knowing the authorities were plotting against him, waiting quietly for his arrest at Gethsemane, letting Pilate and Herod grapple with his fate.

We can’t be sure what was in Jesus’ mind. But we know when we are able to live in Christ consciousness, which Jesus said is available to all of us, we find the peace that passes understanding. We somehow know that all is well even when outer circumstances seem dire, even when we know bad times are coming, even when we have to lay down our lives. Jesus showed us what is possible for human beings when we are fully aligned with God.

I let go of misunderstanding.

As children, we quickly become programmed with our caretakers' beliefs of what is right and wrong. We are conditioned to perceive situations and categorize them as favorable and unfavorable, good or bad, right or wrong. Things quickly become black and white with a few shades of gray. And yet we live in a world that is full of color; the binary is just an illusion.

How often do we cause pain to ourselves and others because of misunderstanding—pain and confusion that could be avoided by asking simple questions? If we could release our preconceived thoughts about situations, how much more love and compassion could flow freely into our lives?

Today, before assuming someone's intent, I pause to ask for clarification. I increase my awareness and open my heart to understanding.

We look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.—2 Corinthians 4:18

—Laura Carl

AFFIRM: *I release my preconceived beliefs to seek clarity and compassion.*

I let go of outdated beliefs.

The Lenten season is the perfect opportunity to breathe, reassess, pray, and let go of things that no longer serve. It's a time to turn within and discern how the presence and power of God can express through us.

We may question whether the beliefs we hold were created in fear or love. Were we told we are unworthy, unlovable, or not enough? Today we can choose to put our faith in someone's erroneous opinions or in our divinity.

Consider this Lenten False Belief Detox Program:

- Negative self-talk: If your self-talk makes you feel bad, deny it, bless it, and release it.
- Media programs that instill fear: Ask the question, *Is this of Spirit?* If not, change the channel.
- People: Do they uplift or tear down? Make a conscious choice with whom to spend time.

These weeks before Easter are an energetic call to let go of any ideas that tell us we are less than a child of God.

May God grant me to speak with judgment, and to have thoughts worthy of what I have received.—Wisdom of Solomon 7:15

—Rev. Sheree Taylor-Jones

AFFIRM: *I am God's beloved and powerful beyond measure.*

I let go of perfectionism.

Many of us struggle with internalized perfectionism. We try to get everything exactly right. But that is a trap. Perfectionistic thinking shuts us down and prevents us from even starting on our goals. We fear we will fail and that will make us a failure.

Not true! It is an error thought.

But shouldn't we do our best?

Sure. But sometimes a person starts taking guitar lessons and thinks they are going to play "Stairway to Heaven" next week. Totally unreasonable, but that is what perfectionistic thinking does.

What you are after is progress, not perfection. Completeness, not infallibility. You achieve this by confronting error thinking and replacing it with a positive thought.

Perfection is often defined as *without any errors*. But the secondary definition, *complete*, is much more reasonable. You are trying something new, so embrace the mistakes because they are progress toward completion.

For all of us make many mistakes.—James 3:2

—Rev. John Connor

AFFIRM: *I give myself grace with my mistakes,
and I make progress.*

I let go of darkness.

It may not be the darkness itself that I need to release but my fear of it. In this world of duality, darkness has a meaningful purpose. When I let go and trust the one power, Spirit, I open myself to new ways of knowing and being.

Darkness is an essential phase to gather strength and energy for transformation.

Underground, life is in process—preparing and unfolding. The soil is enriched by things laid to rest, released to nurture another cycle of life. Trees communicate through their roots. Mushroom networks support the health of their neighbors. Burrowers find safe travel and restful havens. Seeds are nourished by mineral-rich, dark soil until ready to reach upward. Even above ground, darkness offers safe spaces for nurturing and becoming: a womb, a cocoon, a cave.

I let go while in the darkness, knowing I am always lovingly supported by Spirit.

*Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright
as the day, for darkness is as light to you.—Psalm 139:12*

—Malayna Dawn

AFFIRM: *I am always one with Spirit,
in darkness and in light.*

I let go of indecision.

Every day we face innumerable choices: what to eat, what to wear, when to go out or stay home. These daily choices are easy and routine. But we may feel conflicted when making major life decisions—changing jobs or leaving a relationship—and our way may not seem clear.

We have access to the wisdom of the ages within us. We can become still, allow our thoughts to settle, and focus our attention on our idea of God. When we let go of our inner struggle and allow divine wisdom to show us the way, we are assured that a path through our difficulties will eventually reveal itself.

Established in an awareness of a divine guide within, we know when to act and when to be still. We know when to speak and when to remain silent. We can be confident that our highest good is unfolding when we put God first.

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.—Matthew 6:33

—Rev. Dale Worley

AFFIRM: *I am centered in divine wisdom
and my way is clear.*

I let go of worry.

Throughout our lives, we may find ourselves in the midst of worry—worry about ourselves, our friends and families, or the events of our world. The people and events around us sometimes seem to manufacture more and more reasons to worry!

When we worry, we are using our power of imagination to envision the worst-possible outcomes, focusing on exactly what we do not want to experience. As long as we are making up stories about what might come about, we can make a different choice. We can use our power of imagination to envision a story with the best outcomes.

Since any story about the future can only be fabricated by our imagination, perhaps we can guide our imagination toward what we wish to see. By letting go of worry, we might allow a version of an uplifting and brighter story to be made manifest.

*And can any of you by worrying add a single hour
to your span of life?—Luke 12:25*

—Rev. Karen Romestan

AFFIRM: *I release worry and I guide my thoughts
toward the good I wish to see made manifest.*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 10, 2024

JESUS LET GO OF FEAR

Rev. Ellen Debenport

We've seen how Jesus refused to be swayed by the opinions of others, but how did he keep from being afraid as his situation worsened? We see his fearlessness most vividly in his final week, yet he demonstrated a sense of divine protection and well-being throughout his ministry.

After a busy day of teaching and healing amid great crowds, Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and headed into the Sea of Galilee. He promptly fell asleep, oblivious to a growing storm that was swamping the boat. The disciples cried out, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm" (Matthew 8:25-26).

On a similar evening, Jesus sent the disciples to the other side of the lake while he went up a mountain to pray. Again the boat was tossed by waves. About dawn, the disciples saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. "They were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid'" (Matthew 14:26-27).

Then Peter decided to try walking on water himself. He stepped out of the boat and actually took a few steps on the water before fear overcame him. "He cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (Matthew 14:30-31)

Jesus clearly saw faith as the antidote to fear. We might think it was easy for him to have faith, knowing he was backed by the power of God, but the same is true for each of us. The disciples reflect our human fears and Jesus models the courage of our divine nature.

He cast out demons eight or nine times during his ministry, clearly unafraid of their false power. He reassured his followers that God knew the number of hairs on our heads and not even a sparrow was forgotten in God's sight (Luke 12:6-7).

Within the Beatitudes he released fear of persecution. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10-11).

Most of all, Jesus did not fear reprisals from the authorities of his day. Matthew 23 is a diatribe against them. Repeatedly, Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" as he enumerated the ways they failed to practice what they preached. "You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?" (Matthew 23:33)

Jesus knew dissenters were stoned and even crucified, but he let go of fear to call out the sanctimony of the authorities. He knew death would not be the end of him. He was assuring us of eternal life even before his miraculous demonstration on Easter.

I let go of criticism.

Do you sometimes notice what appears wrong or out of place before you recognize the good that is right in front of you?

In noticing what is wrong, you may decide to comment with “constructive criticism.” Know that it can be destructive in its presentation. Remember, what we see in others is a reflection of what is occurring within us.

When you see something that needs to be changed in someone else, check yourself first. Something within you has found agreement with the appearance and is simply providing a reminder to look for good (God). Discover the negative residing within your consciousness and replace it with the truth of your being.

Now take a new look at the individual or the situation that is before you. It is not easy to admit our own error thoughts, but once we do, we are on the path to peace, perfect health, harmony, and joy.

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.
—Philippians 2:5*

—Rev. Alberta Ware

*AFFIRM: I first look for the good (God)
in everyone and everything.*

I let go of discouragement.

We know our lives will have unexpected twists and turns. The journey is inevitable, but becoming discouraged is optional.

What if we were fully committed to living from universal principles and walking our talk of practical spirituality? Instead of fighting what’s in front of us, what if we faced it head-on, centered in the presence of God? This simple act of surrendering allows us to release our resistance and connect with the divine activity beneath outer circumstances. What we embrace, we can face.

I can rest in the assurance that wherever I find myself, God isn’t just with me, God is within me. I am here by divine appointment. Instead of wasting time asking why, I insist there is something for me to gain at every turn. I pray, follow my inner guidance, and gratefully grab hold of the lessons and blessings within arm’s reach.

*It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.
—Deuteronomy 31:8*

—Trish Yancey, LUT, CSE

*AFFIRM: I find lessons and blessings
in whatever is happening.*

I let go of loneliness.

Random feelings of loneliness have washed over me while dancing to a favorite song in a crowded arena, sharing birthday cake with friends, or walking alone on a moonlit night. They are like waves crashing down in my consciousness, pulling my attention to thoughts and feelings that I am unworthy, unloved, and unlovable.

As I pause in the Silence, I understand that loneliness is my experience only when I misuse my faculty of divine love. I release false ideas that encourage my selfish and fickle withholding of love. These false ideas are grounded in my fear of the appearance of lack and limitation.

Our Way Shower, Jesus, directed us to love others as he loved, without condition and without limits. Divine love is a universal and harmonizing power; it allows each of us to experience the Truth of oneness. When I love with abandon, I understand my connection to all of life and I am never lonely.

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.—1 John 4:11

—Rev. Todd Humphrey

AFFIRM: *I joyfully and fearlessly love with abandon.*

I let go of struggle.

From birth to our final breath, life is punctuated by struggles that serve as milestones. Seen through a spiritual lens, these struggles embody a profound truth: What we call struggle is, in fact, the forging of our physical and spiritual strength or a vital correction in our spiritual evolution.

A butterfly's struggle to emerge from the chrysalis is necessary to take flight. Or our challenges could be compared to the storm that diverts a bird's path. This very storm activates the bird's innate compass, guiding it back to its true destination. Likewise, the veering marriage or vanishing job has the potential to rekindle our inner compass, realigning us with our soul's purpose.

In moments of struggle, remember you have traversed this path before. Each instance involved breaking free from the chrysalis or resetting your trajectory. Trust that this cycle of strength and renewal will persist.

Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ... because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.—Romans 5:3-5

—Rev. Ken Daigle

AFFIRM: *I see with divine eyes; grace fills my days and prospers my struggles.*

I let go of insecurity.

Insecurity is not the truth of my being. I embrace it and release it in love. I am willing to be compassionate and understanding with myself and others.

I let go of feelings of insecurity by contemplating the qualities of my divine nature. In the stillness of my being, I find strength and guidance to overcome erroneous beliefs and habits. I pay attention to my thoughts and give to God what is no longer serving me. In prayer, I discover immense support and guidance. Recognizing the spirit of God as my true source of power, I feel safe and secure.

Nothing and no one has power over me. I am grounded and centered in God. I go forth to do what is mine to do, knowing that I am worthy and safe. I trust and have faith that I am loved and supported.

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.—2 Timothy 1:7

—Rev. Elizabeth Longo

AFFIRM: *I am safe and secure in God.*

I let go of competitiveness.

Emerging from the womb clutching his brother's heel, Jacob's rivalry with Esau was toxic from the start. Eventually, Jacob's trickery, lies, and deceit became so heinous that Esau threatened to kill him. For Jacob, releasing toxic competitiveness meant fleeing. Far from home and family, sleeping with his head on a stone, he dreamt of angels ascending and descending a ladder linking heaven and earth.

Competitiveness isn't necessarily bad. Indeed, it can inspire us to right action and success. But who among us hasn't indulged in less-than-honorable thoughts and deeds when chasing after blessings that belonged to another?

Admitting to the unhealthy ways we show up in relationship is uncomfortable. But like Jacob laying his head upon the stone, as we release the burden of coveting what is rightly another's, grace reveals the steps to fulfilling the truest desires of our hearts.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

—*Philippians 2:3-4*

—Rev. Kurt Condra

AFFIRM: *Collaborating with the Divine, my heart's desires are fulfilled.*

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 17, 2024

JESUS LET GO OF BEING RIGHT

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Jesus did a lot of explaining during his ministry. He tried to describe the nature of God, the oneness of humanity with the Divine, and our ability to live from Christ consciousness in the way he did. He told parables, created memorable sayings, performed healings and other signs—all in an effort to help his followers understand their own divine nature and the impossibility of being separate from God.

What he didn't try to explain was himself—who he was, why he was here, how we should think of him. We've seen how he let go of others' opinions. Despite wild speculation about him, he didn't defend himself. He let go of needing to be understood. Even when faced with criticism, he didn't have to prove himself right.

We see this most vividly in the most dire circumstances—at his trial. The four gospels differ somewhat in their telling of his appearance before the Roman governor Pilate and, only in Luke, the regional ruler Herod. But in each version, Jesus simply refused to explain himself. (Read the full stories in Matthew 27:11-25; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25; and John 18:28-19:16.)

Matthew is the most succinct. "Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed" (Matthew 27:11-14).

In Luke, when Pilate realized Jesus was Galilean, he packed him off to Herod, the Judean ruler who happened to be in Jerusalem. But Herod also couldn't get an explanation from Jesus.

"When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer.

The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate” (Luke 23:8-11).

In each version, Pilate could find no crime Jesus had committed and was ready to release him, but the crowd demanded Barabbas instead. Jesus was led to the cross.

We may be astonished that Jesus gave up his one chance to defend his actions and explain his teachings, to reassure the authorities he had no intention of overthrowing the government but was establishing a spiritual kingdom.

He let go of the need to be seen as *right*. He let his work speak for itself. And his ministry has been justified by the billions who have practiced his teachings for the past 20 centuries.

I let go of chaos.

The word *chaos* may cause feelings of fear in many people. However, chaos can become a great opportunity for growth.

In *The Revealing Word*, Unity cofounder Charles Fillmore defines chaos as a state of disorder, confusion, and discord. He states chaos in our body or affairs is a product of human thinking. When facing chaos in our lives, it is necessary to review our thoughts and feelings. If they are not in agreement with the greatest desires in our hearts, we need to change those thoughts and feelings that caused and empowered the chaos.

In Genesis 1:3 we read: “Let there be light.” In the middle of the formless void, God saw and proclaimed the light. You can do the same.

Look for the blessing and order inherent in the chaos in your life. Accept the opportunity that it is giving you to be transformed. Pronounce it good by the power of your word.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep ... Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

—Genesis 1:1-3

—Rev. Dr. Norma Iris Rosado

AFFIRM: *In the middle of chaos, by the power of my Spirit, I declare: “Let there be light.”*

I let go of bitterness.

We ignore warning signs at our peril. The taste of bitterness is a warning sign. When the tongue senses bitterness, the brain thinks *poison*. An automatic reaction is to spit out what could be a bitter poison.

This is true of bitter tastes, but bitter emotions are sometimes savored for a while. There is no good reason for doing this. Not even righteous indignation merits retaining bitterness. Bitterness maintained means refusing to unshoulder a useless, debilitating burden. Until we drop the burden, betterment is blocked.

We feel lighter the moment we choose to let go of bitterness. No longer are we mistreating ourselves with the heavy burden we created. As with bitterness tasted, we let emotional bitterness go by opening our thoughts to the reality that we alone are punishing ourselves by retaining what harms us. Because we hosted the bitterness, we are also authorized to evict it—the sooner the better.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.—Hebrews 12:15

—Rev. Michael Jamison

AFFIRM: I replace bitterness with betterment.

I let go of fear of lack.

I am determined in my mind to let go of all limiting thoughts and cultivate the knowledge of Truth within me. I cultivate this Truth by meditating on the good in all situations.

There is no room for thoughts of lack in my consciousness. My attention focuses on the endless possibility of God that lives within me. Personal or worldly circumstances sometimes reflect facts that are contrary to this, but there is a knowing within me that says all God's children have access to the abundance of Spirit, and I am God's child. Facts change, but the absolute good that is real, exact, and unchanging never wavers.

The omnipresent Spirit of good is always available, and it is unchanging. I open my inner eyes and mind to tap into this good, and I demonstrate abundance in my life, world, and affairs now.

So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvesttime, if we do not give up.—Galatians 6:9

—Shakira Taylor

*AFFIRM: The fear of lack has no power over me.
I am blessed.*

I let go of apathy.

Have you ever awakened wondering how you could face another day? Perhaps it felt as if a thief stealthily entered your consciousness during the night, robbing you of your enthusiasm and interest in life.

This sneaky feeling of apathy deprives us of the ability to see the beauty before us or feel the love shown to us. We feel separate and alone. It's as if we're shrouded in a gray mist that clouds what we see, hear, and feel.

For most, apathy is short-lived. During its presence, though, we long for joy and connection. We pray for zeal to be reborn in us. So we muster our strength and apply the three Ps. We pray, practice, and participate. Reconnecting with life can be hard work and may not come quickly. Yet we remember that God is everywhere present and continue our quest with faith, knowing that once again we will fully engage with life.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.
—Romans 12:11

—Rev. Carolyn Warnemuende

AFFIRM: I live a life of vibrancy and joy.

I let go of feeling obligated.

How often has a request been made from me and I have responded *yes* before thinking my answer through? So often these responses come as a desire to please or to take advantage of a situation. They come from my ego. The result is a feeling of obligation rather than a willingness to serve. Obligations are often followed by judgments. Now what do I do?

Every situation brings an opportunity to know ourselves a bit more. When I awaken to the dilemma I have created, I am called to forgive myself and own up to my errors. Then I can arise to meet the obligation or request a release from it.

When I turn within to my Christ self, I become aware that I am worthy no matter what. I stand humbled to know that others can and will come forth to do what needs to be done.

Let your word be "Yes, Yes" or "No, No"; anything more than this comes from the evil one.—Matthew 5:37

—Rev. Peggy Konkel

AFFIRM: I serve from a loving, willing heart, knowing God is my Source for all I need.

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2024

I let go of judgment.

Today I release judgment and choose to observe life from a higher point of view. I turn away from conversations or news events that cast blame or criticism. I let go of any judgment I hold toward others who may have been unkind or judgmental toward me.

I choose to be a witness to love and well-being in our beauty-infused world. I practice seeing everyone as God's creation. As I expectantly look for acts of loving-kindness, I also watch for opportunities to be a blessing.

If I've criticized myself, focusing on past errors or goals not met, I now let go of self-judgment and embrace self-love. I make a list of my positive gifts and unique talents, appreciating who I am—a beautiful, divine creation.

Observing life with nonjudgment and compassion, I behold the glorious, incredible experience that life is—and even more joy, love, and delightful experiences spring forth in celebration of being alive.

*The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all
that he has made.—Psalm 145:9*

—Rev. Bronte Colbert

AFFIRM: I observe my world in the light of love.


PALM SUNDAY

MARCH 24, 2024

JESUS LET GO OF THE OUTCOME

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Palm Sunday is celebrated as Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem when his followers waved palm branches and shouted *hosanna*. But Jesus knew his life was in danger. The Bible says he "set his face" for Jerusalem, knowing it was the right place for him to be, letting go of whatever might happen.



In the final week of Jesus' life, which we commemorate as Holy Week starting today, we see him letting go in all the ways we have discussed: letting go of ego, of others' approval, of worry, of fear, and of needing to be seen as right. We also see him letting go of outcomes, letting events unfold without his interference, trusting in his highest good.

This is demonstrated most dramatically in his dealings with Judas, a story told in all four gospels.

At the Last Supper, after he had washed the disciples' feet, Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking ... 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do' ... So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night" (John 13:21-22, 26-27, 30).

Jesus let him go.

Jesus also predicted that Peter would deny him three times before the cock crowed, but he didn't try to talk Peter out of it. Peter was aghast and swore he would do no such thing, but within hours he did deny knowing Jesus.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed and waited for the arrest he knew was coming. After pleading with the disciples to stay awake with him, he said, "See, my betrayer is at hand."

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do'" (Matthew 26:46-50).

Jesus remained in this state of letting go throughout his subsequent trial, the procession to Calvary, and the crucifixion.

We marvel at his equanimity, his serenity, having found a peace that passes understanding. He tapped a vast inner reservoir of spiritual strength.

So can we. What we see in Jesus is the result of steady, continuous deepening of his spiritual understanding, knowing his own divine essence. Jesus put in the spiritual work, and it served him at a time when others might flee or resist. And he promised we could do anything he could do (John 14:12).

I let go of doubt.

Doubts are a natural part of the human condition, and a bit of self-doubt keeps us humble, potentially pushing us to grow and change for the better.

But doubts, if allowed to run unchecked, can undermine our outlook on life, our confidence, even our relationships. Rather than trusting our instincts, we question our decisions. Rather than believing in the goodness of others, we suspect their motives. Rather than knowing that the universe is conspiring for our good, we question our faith.

We must doubt our doubts, if you will. Examine them. Question them. Are they propelling you forward or holding you back? One way to harness your doubts is to meditate, pray, and/or write about them. Connecting to your own inner wisdom will help you make decisions, think more clearly, and give you confidence that Spirit, not your doubts and fears, is guiding your life.

But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.—James 1:6

—Angie Olson

AFFIRM: *I am in tune with my own inner wisdom.*

I let go of drama.

As we travel down the path of this beautiful life, there may be occasions when drama travels with us. Then life may seem to lose some of its luster. A wrestling match may erupt on the mat of our minds, and all peace and serenity may slide away.

How blessed we are to have the option to fall into the welcoming and loving arms of our shepherd, who is our constant guide and companion. Aligning our hearts and minds with God will give us clear direction, and the drama will fade away.

Breathing in slowly and mindfully, slowing to stillness, and filling ourselves up with gratitude pulls us away and frees us from inner and outer drama.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.—Philippians 4:8

—Rev. Lulu Logan

AFFIRM: *I release drama and extend peace and love to all.*

I let go of negative thinking.

In today's world, getting caught up in thoughts and conversations that start with "ain't it awful" seems commonplace. Negative thoughts may arise from what's happening in the world and may also bubble up from within as unfavorable thoughts about ourselves. We may berate ourselves for perceived imperfections and conjure up unflattering names, perhaps even some we were labeled as children and then adopted.

When we recognize that negative thinking gives rise to dispirited feelings, we can choose to become consciously aware of those thoughts and substitute positive ones instead. We can concentrate on our good qualities—kindness and compassion, sense of humor, and so much more.

Troubling events in the world are a reality, yet instead of focusing on the negative, we can choose to turn our thoughts to the beauty and wonder that exist everywhere.

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.—Proverbs 16:24

—Rev. Margo Ford

AFFIRM: *I focus my thoughts on the goodness and beauty in the world.*

I let go of anger.

Anger can consume us, and yet to let it go we must willingly acknowledge its presence. If we attempt to bypass that step on the journey, we allow anger to color our perception of every area of life.

Today is Maundy Thursday, a day when we remember the Last Supper. We are told there was contention that evening regarding seating placement. Jesus could have responded from a place of anger about what was happening. Instead, we are told in the Gospel of John that he washed the feet of each disciple, even Judas.

Even though Jesus was “troubled in spirit,” he chose to honor the disciples by performing the most menial task they could have imagined. He then threw down a challenge that they were to do unto others as he had done unto them. We must let go of our anger in order to share our gifts with the world.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.—John 13:35

—Rev. Patty Williams

AFFIRM: *My actions and thoughts are fueled by love.*

GOOD FRIDAY

MARCH 29, 2024

I let go of blame.

Father, punish them, for they know what they have done. What if these were Jesus' words from the cross? What if he had refused to suffer any longer and done what the Devil tempted him to do in the wilderness?

When facing challenges, it is tempting to blame an outside source. We summon legions of angry, hurtful thoughts against those we hold responsible, securing our role as victim to their words or actions.

But in his last moments, Jesus harbored no blame. He offered forgiveness to those who punished him. He offered comfort to those who mourned. He clung to the message at the heart of his ministry, seeing the divinity within all humanity. He chose love above all else.

When challenges with others or through your own missteps arise, stop. Breathe. Choose to meet them from your Christ nature. Forgive. Understand. Love. And be made whole.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."—Luke 23:34

—Rev. David B. Adams

AFFIRM: Today I let go of blame and view every experience in the light of understanding.

HOLY SATURDAY

MARCH 30, 2024

I let go of fear of change.

On this day long ago, Jesus' disciples were in a state of shock. They were grieving his crucifixion and frightened of what might happen. In John 19, Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple because he feared the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take Jesus' body. After being granted permission, he removed the body, anointed it with oil, wrapped it in linens, and placed it in an empty tomb.

In order to move on, Joseph of Arimathea needed to travel from his head to his heart. Although his world was changing around him, he listened within. "The first step is to get in tune with the Infinite," Eric Butterworth wrote in his essay "How to Overcome Fear and Worry." We can take a gentle, cleansing breath to get in touch with the indwelling presence of God. As we do this, we release fear and embrace change wholeheartedly.

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.—Isaiah 41:10

—Rev. Edith Washington-Woods

AFFIRM: I am willing to release all limiting thoughts and know change as my divine birthright.

EASTER SUNDAY

MARCH 31, 2024

JESUS LET GO OF PHYSICAL LIFE

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Laying down one's life is the ultimate letting go. Most of us are not called to die early as part of our life's mission, as Jesus was, but at times we may experience the end of life as we know it. The Easter story resonates year after year because in the crucifixion, tomb, and resurrection, we recognize our own experiences of loss, the void, and renewal.

In the Book of John, four chapters are devoted to the farewell discourses in which Jesus tried to prepare the disciples to carry on without him. (Read them in John 14-17.) That's when he said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13).

Of course, all of us will eventually release our physical bodies. Sometimes death is a healing. The world might be a more peaceful place if we could view death not as a tragedy but a natural end to our temporary physical existence.

Jesus' resurrection proved to us that life is eternal. We will never know exactly what happened that Sunday morning, but it was significant enough to become part of the stories handed down through the years. By the time they were written as the gospels, they varied in exactly what Jesus did or said or looked like after his resurrection, but somehow he communicated to his followers that he was still right here.

We can be reassured that our spiritual essence continues after a physical death. But the story also means that no matter what comes to an end in our lives, there will be a new day. We may spend time in darkness, but eventually the stone will roll away and the sun will stream in.

The Easter story is a beautiful metaphor for the losses in our lives that lead to unexpected renewal. The losses may even be necessary. After all, there would have been no resurrection without crucifixion.

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And so today we celebrate this teaching—not only that our souls continue their spiritual journey after death but that our human lives are on an upward trajectory while we are here. Feeling sad and alone may be part of our experience, but we can look forward to the day when our good becomes visible.

The sooner we become willing to let go of whatever life circumstances we cling to, the sooner we can enter the new realm of our good. Transformation is always possible and may even be our souls' purpose for these lives.

Today we celebrate all that the Easter story means to us. The idea of the risen Jesus communicates a message of divine support for the lives we are living. It reassures us that death and darkness are never the last word. And it lets us know our divine nature can be just as strong, as grounded, and as loving as we saw in Jesus.



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Unity Village, MO 64065-0001
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G1325-12-23
Canada BN 13252 9033 RT
Printed U.S.A.