

A photograph of a garden path leading through lush greenery. On the left, there are large, vibrant blue hydrangea flowers. The path is made of dark stones and leads towards a bright, sunlit area where sunlight filters through the trees, creating a soft, glowing effect with lens flare. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

In the
Garden

LENT 2025



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Rebirth and Renewal

In the northern hemisphere, the Easter season takes many of us from the last of winter to the first of spring. We begin to witness the rebirth and renewal of nature, bringing new hope every year.

Here at Unity, the season puts us in mind of a garden, which might be the perfect image to describe our spiritual work during Lent. Rather than thinking of Lent as a time of sacrifice, in Unity we see it as a period of consciously releasing what we do not need, much like weeding a garden to make space for new growth. Just as plants are pruned to stay healthy, we release negative habits or traits that crowd out our good.



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Generous gifts from friends like you allow us to make Unity literature available to those most in need of spiritual encouragement. You may give at unity.org/donatenow.

For this booklet, we created a list of human qualities that might be ripe for release. Our New Thought writers address these traits on each of the 40 weekdays during Lent and suggest ways to let them go. On the five Sundays leading to Holy Week, Rev. Ellen Debenport, vice president of publishing for Unity World Headquarters, explores the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and his supreme act of release and surrender the night before his crucifixion. Special entries for Palm Sunday and Easter were contributed by Rev. Teresa Burton, editor of *Daily Word*.

We affirm with you that the Lenten season will refresh your spirit like green sprouts in a garden, so at Easter you will joyously celebrate the divinity rising within you. To quote *Daily Word* from last spring:

Like the flower, I bloom and stand tall.
My roots nurture me with spiritual truth as I
open myself and stretch toward the sun.

Your Friends in Unity

*Note: All scriptures in this booklet are from the
New Revised Standard Version.*

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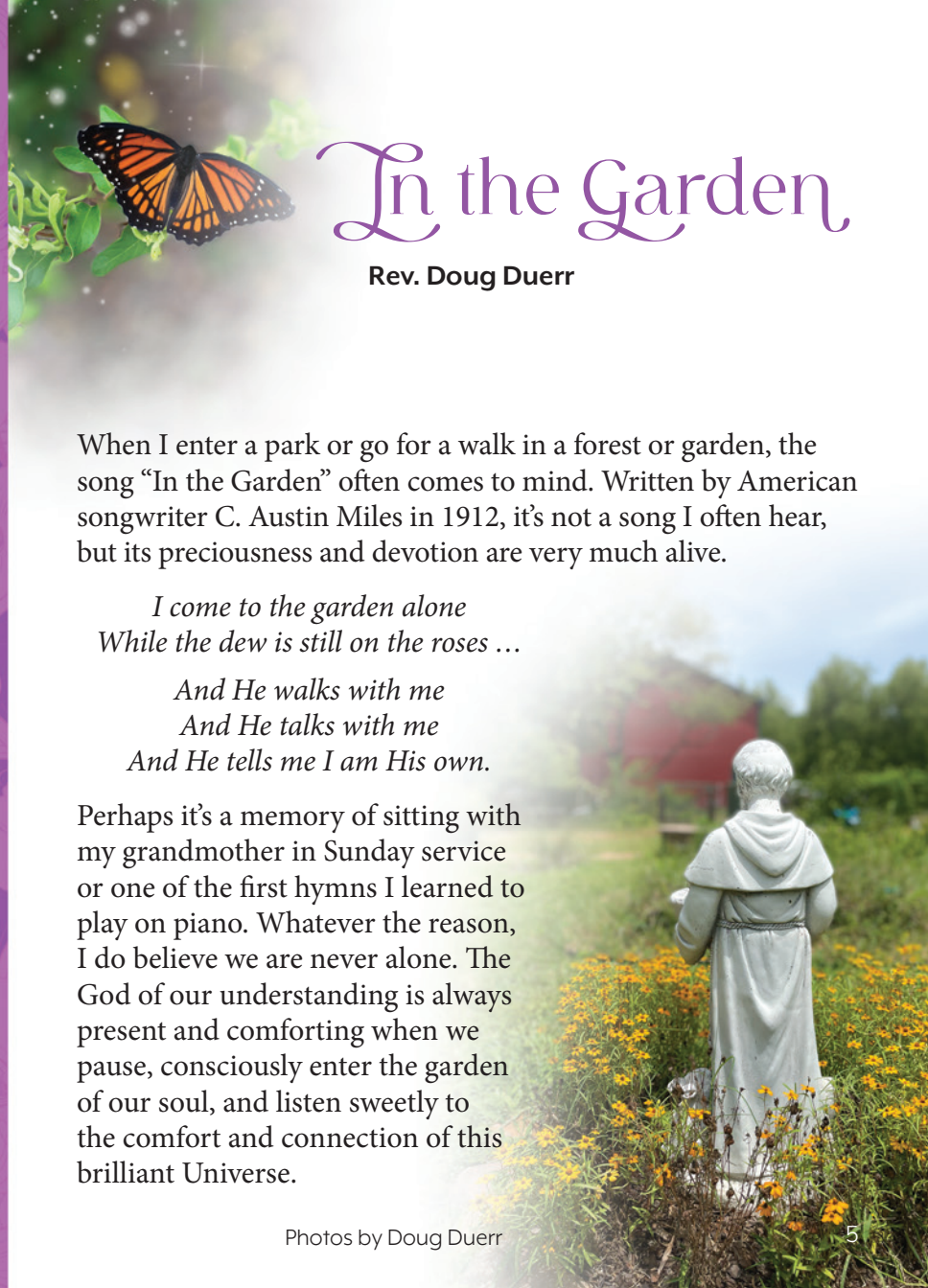
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In the Garden

Rev. Doug Duerr

When I enter a park or go for a walk in a forest or garden, the song “In the Garden” often comes to mind. Written by American songwriter C. Austin Miles in 1912, it’s not a song I often hear, but its preciousness and devotion are very much alive.

*I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses ...*

*And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own.*

Perhaps it’s a memory of sitting with my grandmother in Sunday service or one of the first hymns I learned to play on piano. Whatever the reason, I do believe we are never alone. The God of our understanding is always present and comforting when we pause, consciously enter the garden of our soul, and listen sweetly to the comfort and connection of this brilliant Universe.



In the garden of our souls, we are both the gardeners and the stewards of the sacred soil. We plant the seeds of our intentions, dreams, and aspirations with care, tilling the earth with our hopes and nurturing them with faith. As we work diligently, we watch our garden grow, each blossom a testament to our efforts and our divine connection.

I cherish the memories of helping and observing my grandmother in her own garden, harvesting beautiful vegetables every season. She would can, freeze, or serve them fresh for supper in the evening. She never complained. She worked very hard, often singing as she worked. I believe it was her faith and trust in the abundance given to us that kept her grateful, even when she had little in the scheme of things. It was always a feast of plenty in her world and in mine. The garden remains a precious and sacred memory for me today. My grandmother is always there, and I smile.

Yet no garden flourishes without attention to the weeds that inevitably appear. By creating clear boundaries in our lives, we make space for new

Photo by Doug Duerr

growth and ensure that our garden remains healthy and vibrant. We're continually presented with opportunities for our own spiritual growth and renewal.

The Lenten season offers us a sacred time to let go of what no longer serves us, much like clearing away the old growth and weeds in a garden. It is a period of reflection and release, making way for an abundant new plan and divine design. As we welcome this transformation, we surely will prosper a beautiful harvest within ourselves. This internal blossoming extends beyond us, enveloping our communities and the world with the fruits of our labor and love. In embracing this cycle of letting go and renewal, we align with the divine rhythm and contribute to the flourishing of the collective garden of humanity.

As we bless and acknowledge the full scope of our gardening plan, we see that every plant, every flower, and even the spaces between them holds a purpose. By tending to our inner garden with love and care, we prepare the ground for an abundant and blooming life. With a deep faith, we know that the essence of our being is love, and through this love, we cultivate a garden that is ever ready to flourish.

Trust in the stillness, sing in the garden, and pray in gratitude affirming that good is unfolding each day.

*And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

Rev. Doug Duerr is a Unity minister, author, coach, ministry consultant, and a cohort leader for the ministerial program. His book, *Resonance*, is dedicated to his grandmother and her example of strong, mature faith. Visit dougduerr.com.

¶ release stress.

We all know what it means to be stressed because we've all been there! You may even be there now. We are often stressed about our health, our job or business, our family situation, or our finances. Unfortunately, stress can have a negative impact on our mental and physical health. When we begin to feel stressed, it's always best to return to our spiritual principles. Our goal is to have them undergird all our outer activities.

Emmet Fox, a prominent New Thought leader of the early 20th century, taught that when challenges arise, rather than useless worrying we should look beyond them to God. When we think about God/our higher power/Spirit manifesting as perfect health and wholeness, joy and happiness, love and harmony, we give energy to that which we desire and take energy away from the problem. We shift our attention from *stressing* to *letting*—letting God express in and through us as good.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.—Psalm 37:3-4

—Rev. Saba Mchunguzi

¶ release discontent.

Have you ever found yourself satisfied with a particular choice, only to later regret it? What once brought fulfillment now leaves you feeling drained; what brought joy becomes a burden.

For spiritual beings on an evolutionary journey, discontent plays an integral role. It speaks through an ache in the pit of the stomach, a restless mind, or an unquenchable fatigue. While our spiritual nature yearns to search, seek, and expand, discontent is the voice of ego stifling that still, small voice within.

Ego desires consistency, often resisting change. But change is the fuel of spiritual development; in our willingness to embrace change, we can remain content no matter the circumstance before us. Rather than allowing discontent to drain or stifle, see it as a signal for something exciting that is underway. Let discontent turn your attention inward, allowing that still, small voice to move you toward your next adventure.

Be content with what you have; for he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”—Hebrews 13:5

—Rev. David B. Adams

Affirm:
I let go of stress and I am free!

Affirm:
Contentment is my way of being.

I release thoughts of lack.

Have you ever heard someone complain that they didn't have enough or claim they couldn't afford something? You may have said those words yourself. How often do we argue for our limitations? Look at the words we use. Evidence of lack and limitation comes from fear. Faith instead opens us to creative possibilities.

What's in your thoughts? If you want to know, take a look at your life. Thoughts of lack shut the door to the abundant flow of good the Universe has for you. Once we release the habit of focusing on whatever we perceive as lacking, we can move from a mindset of scarcity to one of abundance, health, wisdom, and well-being. A little willingness to believe in the constant flow of God's good is all it takes to change our experience.

When we choose to release patterns of lack thinking, God's good begins to show up everywhere. It is always flowing. Let's stop getting in its way.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.—Proverbs 4:23

—Rev. Lesley Miller

Affirm:

*Divine abundance flows through my life
and circumstances at all times.*

I release rigidity.

Poor Jonah—tossed overboard, swallowed by a fish, spat out on a beach, and baked under a scorching sun—all because he refused to change his mind about the people God sent him to help.

It's admirable to stand firm in our beliefs, but insisting our way is the only way can be both painful and limiting. The key is to keep an open mind. That said, recognizing when we've crossed from conviction to stubbornness can be difficult. Physical or emotional signs—a tightened jaw, clenched fists, a stiffened back, or a flash of temper—are clues we're heading down Jonah's path.

Noticing these signals is the first step. Then it's about finding our center again. Take deep breaths. Listen more than speak. Affirm God's presence. Pray for peace.

Jonah never gets it; to the end, he rigidly clings to his mistaken beliefs. His story reminds us that, no matter the experience, we can choose to keep our hearts and minds open—or not.

Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future.—Proverbs 19:20

—Rev. Kurt Condra

Affirm:

I earnestly listen for guidance and follow it freely.

Jesus Asked Friends for Support

Rev. Ellen Debenport

When we invoke a thriving garden as a symbol for the Lenten season, we remember that Jesus spent his final night in a garden—the Garden of Gethsemane—a quiet place in Jerusalem where he and his disciples often had gone to pray.

All four gospels give an account of Jesus praying alone as he prepared himself for his inevitable arrest and execution. He knew that he had upset the authorities beyond their level of tolerance. His frenzied crowds unnerved them because they feared those crowds might turn on the rulers.

In these five Sundays leading to Holy Week, we will explore the elements of the story of Gethsemane. Lent is a period of release, and there could be no greater release than Jesus' laying down his life. We can draw many lessons from this brief story to apply to our own spiritual development.

We will use Matthew's version because it is the most detailed.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."—Matthew 26:36-38

In these introductory verses, we already see three lessons to adopt for ourselves:

Go apart. Jesus wanted to pray alone. He did this often, taking the opportunity to realign his consciousness with the Divine. We know how hard it is for us to maintain an elevated state of mind and not to be pulled into human drama. Jesus, surrounded by demanding crowds, needed time alone to immerse himself in the divine presence.

Ask for support. In a difficult time, Jesus asked his best friends to stay with him—Peter and brothers James and John, whose father was Zebedee. He wanted to pray alone, but he still sought their spiritual and emotional support—simply to be present and awake with him.

Share feelings. Jesus even went so far as to admit his distress to these men he trusted. He released any human self-consciousness and let himself be vulnerable. He asked for help when he needed it.

How many of us have pretended to be tough—"I'm fine, just fine"—and declined offers of help when we were in a difficult place? Being stoic doesn't make us more spiritual. In fact, in this brief scene, Jesus shows us exactly how someone living in divine consciousness handles a threat that most of us can't even imagine. He prays, he asks friends for support, and he's open about his feelings.

If we consider Jesus to be our Way Shower, then he is showing us that human feelings are acceptable, even to those aware of their divinity. We don't have to be positive all the time, nor do we have to handle problems alone. We can lean on other people, if only by asking them to be present with us. We can talk about how we are feeling even when we are "deeply grieved, even to death."

We are fully human and fully divine, just as Jesus was. At Gethsemane, he shows us exactly what that looks like in the direst circumstances.

I release confusion.

Releasing confusion is often said to be a matter of reconnecting with our inner knowing. When confusion arises, it's a sign that we've lost touch with our inner guidance or the divine presence within us.

To dispel confusion, we must be willing to take the time to reestablish this connection. Often, sharing our thoughts with a loved one who listens with unconditional love and understanding can help us find the answers within ourselves. They do not need to provide solutions but simply listen. If no one is available, writing down our challenges and penning a letter to ourselves from the perspective of the Divine can also help restore our connection.

Once we remember that our connection to our inner knowing dispels confusion, we can take action to reconnect and find clarity.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.—Matthew 18:20

—Rev. Suzanne Carter

Affirm:

I reconnect with the divine presence within and find clarity on what to do.

I release overindulgence.

Underlying every indulgence, compulsion, and addiction is self-will and a craving for power over some aspect of living. Self-will in a child bingeing on sweets may be tolerated, but in adults, overindulgence is undermining and self-wounding.

Willful seeking of pleasure through the senses to soothe pain and fill emptiness can be a wake-up call to study the spiritual dimensions of will, our executive faculty. Living from our true Christ nature is rooted in the understanding, "I do nothing on my own ..." (John 8:28).

Beginning the day with spiritual practices harnesses the will, thereby calming cravings and reestablishing an inner sense of connection. The spiritual humility of releasing the need to have power over anything is nurtured by affirming: *Not my will, but divine will for good is done through me.* Divine will is given the reins. Inner integrity leads the way throughout the day.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?—1 Corinthians 6:19

—Rev. Kathy Harwood Long

Affirm:

Divine will for good is done through me.

I let go of blame.

I let go of blame because the power to overcome hardship is never in what happened to me. Rather, power is in what lies within me.

Unlike the Adam and Eve allegory (Genesis 3:12-13), I choose to avoid the blame game. Perpetually pointing the finger at myself or someone or something external to myself creates an endless loop of pain that offers no opportunity to transform hurtful outcomes into loving, just, compassionate, and peaceful experiences.

I let go of blame by focusing my faith in directions that empower me rather than diminish me. I let go of blame, knowing that I may make mistakes, but I am not a mistake. I let go of blame with the understanding that actions intended to hurt me can be transformed into a blessing for me. I let go of blame because it no longer serves me. I let go of blame. Period!

For the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.—1 John 4:4

—Rev. Sheila R. McKeithen, J.D.

Affirm:

In faith, I embrace my greater possibilities over the pain of blame.

I release discouragement.

When expectations are not met, discouragement rises and hope drops. Sometimes a setback will discourage us so much that we do not want to try again. This is good, if by trying again we intend to use the same failed strategy. Doing the same thing while expecting different results adds frustration to discouragement.

Liberation from discouragement depends on dismissing failed assumptions. It takes courage to discard the way things have been done before. It takes courage to choose a new way of being, to release discouragement, let go the old, and grasp the new.

Reaching for what is new has us teetering on the edge of transformation. On edge is not a comfortable place to be. We might be tempted to step back to relieve discomfort and accept dismay. This is not a wise trade. Instead, step forward to release discouragement and claim success.

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?—Isaiah 43:18-19

—Rev. Michael Jamison

Affirm:

I choose a new way of being.

I release hostility.

In the book *Prosperity*, Unity cofounder Charles Fillmore reminds us that it is impossible for anyone to claim to love and trust God yet have hostile feelings toward another human being.

He wrote, “As love attracts, hate dissipates” and “The two ideas, love and hate ... simply cannot both be present in your mind at one time, and when you are entertaining one, you may be sure the other is absent.”

Anger and hostility destroy physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Hostility held in our hearts and minds causes insomnia, anxiety, and even chronic illness. Harboring hostile thoughts and feelings is akin to overloading an electrical system, creating dangerous power surges that can potentially destroy our devices and even cause fires.

Antidotes for this destructive energy are forgiveness and unconditional love. To paraphrase *The Revealing Word*, when the heavenly state of mind is established, we are restored to our natural wholeness.

Persue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.—Hebrews 12:14

—Rev. Vernelle Nelson

Affirm:

I bless the world with the gifts of unconditional love, harmony, acceptance, and peace.

I release doubt.

In my daily life I must make choices and decisions. I may find myself at a crossroads with two paths opening in front of me and not know which one to take. Doubt puts me in a place of suspicion and distrust. It immobilizes me and stops my progress toward the good that awaits me.

When my heart is troubled by uncertainty or not knowing what to do, it is time to pause. Quieting my mind and bringing my attention to the point of light in my heart can help me restore my balance and give me back the peace, boldness, courage, or firmness that my soul seeks. In a balanced and serene mind, responses flow spontaneously and naturally.

Let us keep in mind that in God there is no hesitancy or vacillation; everything is ordered and clarified. In that presence, I decide now to live my day.

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I put my hope in your words.—Psalm 119:147

—Rev. Beatriz Gallerano Bell

Affirm:

I live this day with determination and security.

Second Sunday of Lent

MARCH 16, 2025

Jesus Prayed No Matter What

Rev. Ellen Debenport

Last week we began to explore the lessons we can take from Jesus' hour of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We saw him:

- Go apart to pray alone
- Ask his friends to support him
- Honestly express his feelings of distress and agitation

This Sunday, we advance the story by only half a verse:

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed ...—Matthew 26:39

The words he used in prayer are the subject for next week. For now, we consider his actions. Jesus prayed.

This may not seem remarkable. After all, Jesus continually went off by himself to pray. But remember the circumstances. He was facing death. He knew why Judas had left the group of disciples at supper. He knew his arrest was imminent. And he knew the Romans had a particularly gruesome way of executing prisoners by nailing them to a cross and waiting for them to die.

How many of us would have the presence of mind to pray if we knew soldiers were on their way to arrest us for execution? Considering such a fate, we might pace, we might wring our hands or cry, we might run or freeze or talk a blue streak. Sometimes we are so upset that it's hard to remember to pray or become calm enough to pray.

Once again, Jesus models for us a spiritual response to horrifying human circumstances. He prays.

Years ago, when I volunteered to pray with people who called the Unity Prayer Ministry, known as Silent Unity, I was surprised how many callers were waiting for something to happen. They were in situations where they didn't know how an issue might be resolved or how bad it might become. They called from doctors' offices and hospital waiting rooms. They called while they were waiting to see whether a loved one or

a pet returned home, waiting for news of someone deployed, waiting for medical test results, and occasionally waiting for a death. They wanted to meet their circumstances with faith.

Prayer can be a first resort and a last resort when we are facing uncertainty. We don't beg God for help—although sometimes that's all we can utter—but instead we pray to recondition our consciousness. We pray to remind ourselves that we are never separate from God, to feel that clear connection and presence. We pray to strengthen our faith and affirm that we live in a universe of good. We pray to acknowledge that we don't always see the spiritual reasons behind the events in our lives or the world, but we trust they are there. We might even pray to remind ourselves that we agreed at a soul level to be in this place and time, then to ask for guidance on what we are to do or to learn.

The point is that even Jesus, with all his divine awareness and capacity for spiritual understanding, turned to prayer in his darkest hour. If it was meaningful for him, surely it can work for us.

Silent Unity® is available to pray with you 24/7 every day of the year. Call to speak to a prayer associate (816-969-2000) or submit your prayer request online (unity.org/pray) or through the BeUnity app (be.unity.org).

I release fear of illness.

There is a saying: *What we think about, we bring about.*

When we think fearful thoughts, we bring about fearful experiences. The good news is, we have the power to choose our reaction to whatever we are experiencing. That reaction can make a difference in whether we are fearful or fearless in the face of a health challenge.

When she was diagnosed with a terminal illness and given six months to live, Unity cofounder Myrtle Fillmore demonstrated this power by focusing her thoughts on life instead of death. When we are facing an illness, we have two choices. We can entertain fearful thoughts or we can affirm that we have a divine inheritance of good despite any appearance to the contrary.

Unity teaches that we create our reality by what we choose to think, feel, and believe. In other words, what we think about, we bring about.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.—Psalm 118:24

—Rev. Sandra Campbell

Affirm:

I release fear of illness and choose thoughts of wholeness and well-being in mind, body, and spirit.

I release resistance.

When something disturbs us, we usually want to push it away as hard and fast as we can. Here's the catch: Pushing at things tilts us off center. What we resist not only persists, but our avoidance feeds what we don't want and gives it more power.

This Lenten season, I purposefully create a new relationship with my fight-or-flight reflex. It signals that an opportunity for growth has arrived. I ask myself, *How do I make this thing before me be for me?* Instead of backing away, I lean in with my faith firmly rooted in Source, anticipating the good to come.

In this new paradigm, I give my power only to things I want to see grow in my life. Though I know that forging this new relationship with discomfort will take time and practice, I trust the rewards are rich.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.—Isaiah 43:2

—Trish Yancey, LUT, CSE

Affirm:

I lean in with faith and embrace whatever life brings my way.

I release anxiety.

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, often caused by uncertainty, sometimes triggered by a traumatic moment in our lives, by fearful thoughts, or by those emotions we do not want to face or feel.

However, it is by feeling them that we can heal them. By acknowledging anxiety and the emotions tied to it, you give yourself the space to fully experience it, allowing it to pass through you instead of becoming trapped within.

Although the process may feel uncomfortable at first, as you practice it and focus on your breathing, you'll notice a profound sense of calm, like the rhythm of the waves of the sea. You will free yourself, and peace will return to you as you remember that God is with you in every moment and in every experience of your life.

I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.—Joshua 1:9

—Rev. Claudia Olmos

Affirm:

I allow myself to trust in God and feel peace.

I release apathy.

Apathy enters our lives in quiet, unassuming ways, like the morning fog that settles in the low-lying land stretched out before us. As fog envelops the beauty in the valley, so apathy's indifference blinds us to the beauty that the Divine has prepared for us. As the mid-day sun melts the fog away to reveal a clear view, so the light of Truth shining through us dissipates the fog of indifference and we discover a new passion for life.

To overcome apathy in our lives, we turn our attention to a friend or loved one who is experiencing a challenge. Then something wonderful happens. Our light-filled, compassionate thought and heartfelt concern for others burns away the fog of apathy in our lives. Clearly seeing the good God has for us, we renew our enthusiasm for life, remember forgotten goals, and discover new pathways for joyous living.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.—1 John 1:5

—Rev. Ric Schumacher

Affirm:

I embrace the light of Truth; I clearly see the good God has for me.

I release worry.

Letting go of worry by changing the stories we tell ourselves requires a conscious effort to flip the script and reframe our internal dialogue. Worry thrives when we focus on negative possibilities—imagining future failures or difficulties that may never happen. These mental scripts create a cycle of worry where we begin to believe that worst-case scenarios are inevitable.

However, by recognizing that these stories are just that—stories—we gain the power to release them. Instead of seeing challenges as threats, we can view them as opportunities for growth and learning. This shift doesn't ignore reality; it empowers us to approach situations with curiosity and resilience rather than fear.

By deliberately refocusing on what could go right, we open ourselves to positive outcomes. By envisioning success, fulfillment, and strength, we change the tone of our inner narrative from worry to resilience, which directly influences how we experience the world.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.—Philippians 4:6

—Rev. Kathy Beasley

Affirm:

I release all worry, trusting that everything is unfolding for my highest good.

I release bitterness.

We all carry situations, people, and experiences that negatively impacted our lives. Things done or not done, said or not said, events that we continue to relive may be painful touchstones that reinforce and legitimize our bitterness and resentment.

Sadly, that bitterness is corrosive to our own soul and no one else's. It eats away at our sense of well-being, joy, and happiness. It impedes our capacity to heal and move forward. It keeps us mired in the past and allows that situation to dictate our future.

You can release bitterness and reclaim your future. When the past is more alive than the present, focus on one blessing in your life right now. Meditate and center in love. Cultivate gratitude and present-moment awareness. Practice affirmative prayer and shift your focus from what wronged you to what supports you. Moment by moment, you can consciously reinforce and legitimize the good in your life.

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another.—Ephesians 4:31-32

—Rev. DeeAnn Weir Morency

Affirm:

I release bitterness and embrace the love and support all around me.



Jesus Honored His Calling

Rev. Ellen Debenport

One of the reasons people sometimes hesitate to ask for divine guidance is because they fear what they might be called to do. It could overturn their comfortable lives. Yet many of us have stories of first resisting an idea that turned out to be exactly right for our spiritual path.

As we explore the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his arrest, we hear him asking for guidance:

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”—Matthew 26:39

In the first part of the prayer, Jesus expressed reluctance by asking whether this was really his to do. It was an understandable human response to an unthinkable situation. Maybe he wouldn't have to go through with what he saw coming.

Yet in the same sentence, he immediately released any doubts or questioning and moved into surrender. “Yet not what I want, but what you want.”

In Matthew, Jesus repeated this prayer three times. In Luke's version, Jesus was so distraught that “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling on the ground” (Luke 22:44). An angel appeared to give him strength.



Jesus knew that under the oppressive Roman regime occupying Judea, his teachings seemed radical and were easily misunderstood. While his primary teaching was to love one another, it was interpreted by the authorities as rabble-rousing or blasphemy.

Despite the danger, Jesus a few days earlier had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey with his followers shouting *hosannas* and waving palm fronds. At the same time on the other side of town, the Judean governor, Pontius Pilate, was entering Jerusalem in a military procession with pageantry fit for an empire whose leader called himself the “Son of God.”

Jesus didn’t change his message. This was the week he overturned tables in the temple. In John, it was the week he raised Lazarus from the dead. He didn’t hesitate to draw attention—teaching, attracting crowds, performing miracles, and letting the chips fall where they may.

Jesus was carrying out what we can clearly see was his soul’s purpose. But he didn’t get to skip any of the human steps, and neither do we. Living a spiritual life does not exempt us from difficult experiences, including those that are unfair and painful.

Jesus might have understood the spiritual reasons behind adversity more clearly than many of us in our most trying times. But we can trust the spiritual reasons exist. We see in Jesus’ experience that none of us get to avoid human hardships, even when we know our oneness with the Divine.

There was no God in the sky willing Jesus into crucifixion. His reference to “what you want” meant the soul plan worked out for his life, the dangerous mission he had accepted on Earth, his calling to live and teach in this place and time. His example for us is to accept our divine callings and play them out to the very end, trusting that our impact will be larger than ourselves.

I release negativity.

Some days negative thoughts seem to overwhelm me. I find myself judging, replaying past mistakes, and getting lost in negative self-talk. I get caught up in the negativity around me and lose sight of what truly matters.

But when I pause and close my eyes, I remember that I can choose to shift my focus. I go within, focus on my breath, and listen to the still, small voice that reminds me all is well. With each inhale and exhale, I reconnect with the peace of God.

As I sit in the Silence, I watch my negative thoughts drift away like passing clouds. I open my eyes to the smile of a loved one, the kindness of a stranger, or a gorgeous sunset. I begin to cherish the limitless beauty in my world.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.—Romans 12:2

—Sara Crawford

Affirm:

I release negative thoughts and embrace peace within.

I release self-pity.

Have you ever heard anyone saying words such as: “They have mistreated me; they are the ones to blame for my failure”? These words speak of victimization and self-pity. They also speak of separation and lack of understanding of ourselves as children of God.

Growing up, some of us were lied to by adults. “You don’t deserve, you don’t have, and you don’t know,” they said. We believed them. Those words may have molded us as weak people, ignoring our capacity to release and overcome any insecurity or loss. Instead, we ended up feeling pity for ourselves.

However, our Truth is that we are God’s children. We have the capacity to be free. Our essence is about having courage and being what we are—God’s image and likeness. We are not victims. We are the crown of creation. This is our time. Let go of self-pity! We are free to be!

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. Norma Iris Rosado

Affirm:

*I am worthy of love and respect. I celebrate my uniqueness.
I am enough just the way I am.*

I release pessimism.

Murphy’s Law—the adage that *anything that can go wrong, will go wrong*, and at the worst possible time—directs the mind to look for and expect events to be bad, wrong, or even evil. Pessimism, focusing on the appearance of anything labeled negative, eliminates joy, drains hope, and misguides faith. Releasing pessimism allows a view from a new perspective.

A pessimist sees a partially filled glass of water as half empty; an optimist sees it half full. By releasing pessimism, we can simply feel gratitude for the refillable glass and an abundance of cool, clear water.

Releasing pessimism is a practice of mindfulness to deliberately choose thoughts focusing on good, love, health, wholeness, and prosperity. A positive experience of faith, hope, joy, and love are fully present with these thoughts held in mind.

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. Todd Humphrey

Affirm:

I look for love in every experience.

I release competition.

The very construct of competition implies that we reduce our life experience to either being very happy some of the time when we win or sad most of the time when we do not win. Competition is exhausting.

Let us strive to be the best we can be without the need to best others. In this mindset we can celebrate every time we do our best regardless of the outcome. We can also celebrate and support others to do even better!

Olympic athletes who surely want to win still cheer on other participants. Notice I did not say competitors but participants. If we approach life with a competition mindset, we end up with winners and losers. When we see each other as fellow participants, we can cheer each other on regardless of the results. Life is much sweeter when we celebrate everyone without having to best them.

For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.—Luke 22:27

—Rev. Bill Englehart

Affirm:

I celebrate and support all other participants in life as we journey together on the road to personal fulfillment.

I release procrastination.

Have you ever needed to complete something but said to yourself, *I'll do it later?* This widespread behavior, referred to as procrastination, is highlighted by the age-old saying often attributed to Benjamin Franklin, “Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today.”

Today make a conscious decision to overcome the cycle of procrastination. Set a powerful intention to focus and take the following inspired action steps:

- Turn within to become aware of the thoughts and beliefs connected to your past patterns of resistance to getting things done.
- Ask for divine assistance to take the first step to accomplish any desired task.
- Trust that you are being easily guided in completing the next steps.
- Appreciate and acknowledge your willingness to change old patterns of behavior.

**But all things should be done decently and in order.
—1 Corinthians 14:40**

—Veronica Walker-Douglas

Affirm:

It is finished!

I release distraction.

Did you know that our minds are hardwired for distraction? Our nature is to crave being pulled away from the task at hand and experiencing the gratification of change.

We need not be victims of minds that wander. A profound human birthright is the gift of choice. We have the choice to let go of distraction and focus on what we really want. Our deepest desire is to connect with our higher power and experience the fullness of each moment.

We can set ourselves up for success by adopting strategies to block distractions. This takes commitment and a willingness to practice a different way. It demands the intention to set up a distraction-free environment, to prioritize, and to ignore what pulls us away from our priorities.

When we practice intention, we reclaim our attention and create a richer life. Today we release distraction.

Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.—Proverbs 4:25

—Rev. Carolyn Warnemuende

Affirm:

*Today I am present with each moment,
savoring the fullness of life.*



Jesus Forgave His Friends' Weakness

Rev. Ellen Debenport

This fourth Sunday of Lent finds us once again with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. As we adapt his experience to our own, so far we have seen him make a point of praying alone while asking three good friends to stay nearby. We have heard him express feelings of distress and ask God if he could somehow avoid his fate. And we have seen him surrender to his mission and the spiritual reasons for his experience, difficult as it promised to be.

Now Jesus returns to Peter, James, and John, whom he asked to stay awake with him:

Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.—Matthew 26:40-44

Jesus' initial reaction to these sleeping disciples seemed to be annoyance. We can understand his disappointment that the men he trusted had not supported him after all.

Think how comforted some of us feel when we know friends and family are praying for us, or waiting for us during surgery, or holding us in the light on an important day. How disappointed would we be to find they got distracted and forgot about us?

Yet Jesus saw a teachable moment. "Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Some translations say "that you may not enter into temptation." A little prayer wouldn't have hurt the disciples. Their time sleeping in the garden was a missed opportunity for them.

Yet Jesus quickly forgave them. "The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He knew they meant well, and it was no surprise they were tired so late in the evening.

Taking Jesus' words to heart for ourselves, in what ways is our spirit willing but our flesh weak? Maybe it's knowing how to take good care of our bodies but failing to do so. Maybe it is suspecting that we are being called to make changes in our lives but declining to heed the guidance. Maybe it is seeing some of the ways we could improve the world but never quite getting off the couch.

We are not bad people any more than the disciples were bad for falling asleep. Some of us just have a tendency to take the easier road. Yet if Jesus himself asked us to stay awake, wouldn't we find a way?

We have the same divine energy in us that Jesus had, and he promised we could do all the same things he did (John 14:12). This week's lesson is to pay attention to what we are being called to do and be. Just as the disciples were asked to stay awake by no less a power than Jesus, we are prompted to stay awake to our spiritual growth by the Christ within us.

I release busyness.

When did the measure of our busyness become a measure of our worth? It seems as though busyness has become a badge of honor in our fast-paced world. Yet during the Lenten season, we are invited to pause and reflect on what truly matters in our lives.

Releasing busyness creates a spaciousness within our being to experience a deeper connection with God. By prioritizing moments of silence and stillness we create the opportunity to commune with Spirit and listen for the guidance we seek.

Consider setting aside specific times each day to disconnect from the outer world and connect intentionally with the inner. Allowing for this time of prayer or meditation, we open our hearts to deeper connection with God and with others. During Lent this year, embrace the gift of simplicity and find peace in the quiet moments. Let go of the rush and discover the sacred in the stillness.

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

—Rev. Maggie Alderman

Affirm:

I embrace peace, balance, and the present moment.

I release resentment.

Resentment is tempting. You are justified, right? You had a reasonable expectation of something—care, fair treatment, safety—yet it didn't happen. If you let go of resentment for unjust actions, aren't you condoning what happened to you?

No.

We don't condone what happened. We simply accept that resentment can't change the past. Underneath resentment is the idea that the past needs to be and can be changed. But what happened, happened.

What we can do today is choose. Choose to write about the situation and ceremoniously toss it into the fireplace. Let the smoke literally rise to a higher level as you rise to your next level of peace. Of contentment. Of divine joy. Try this with a small resentment first, then on to more challenging ones. You get to choose.

Now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come ...—Song of Solomon 2:11-12

—Rev. John Connor

Affirm:

I release my past and embrace my joy.

I release complaining.

“Everyone complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.” That old adage, often attributed to Mark Twain, may elicit a smile because we know much of what we complain about is beyond our capacity to resolve.

When we complain, it often leaves us feeling dispirited and drained. While we may have little control over the circumstance evoking our complaints, we can choose to change our attitude or alter our expectations by uncovering something positive in the midst of unpleasantness.

If the old couch is tattered and needs replacing, we heed the words of Myrtle Fillmore: “Bless your old couch and see it as a symbol of comfort and support. Complaining only brings more dissatisfaction.”

When we are frustrated by weeds sprouting forth in our garden, we can recognize that as we dig them out, we are enhancing the beauty of the landscaping we created. How uplifting!

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.—Romans 14:19

—Rev. Margo Ford

Affirm:

I focus my attention on the love, joy, and beauty in my life.

I release mistrust.

Many of us mistrust anything but our minds. We think we can figure it all out, find the perfect solution, and control the outcome. We trust only our own rational thought processes and maybe a smart friend’s advice. When things don’t work out, we may be astonished and depressed and wonder why.

Trusting your rational mind isn’t the answer. Yes, it has a place. First, though, you need to let go of mistrust of God. Recognize that you can depend on God for everything. God can be fully, wholly, completely trusted.

A Course in Miracles says that in God, “There is no sickness not already healed, no lack unsatisfied, no need unmet” (Workbook, Lesson 159). So ask God. Listen and follow. For you, God has all the answers, all the perfect solutions and resolutions, and all the highest outcomes.

But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.—Psalm 13:5

—Noelle Sterne, Ph.D.

Affirm:

I trust God, fully, wholly, completely, in all.

I release words that pollute.

It is easy to be careless with our words. Once spoken, we move on to the next conversation without giving a thought to the power of the words we are choosing. In fact, words can alter our reality, both internal and external. Just like toxins released into the atmosphere, words can pollute or contaminate our relationships, lives, even our world.

It takes practice to notice when we are using words harmful to ourselves or others. Listen for words we use as weapons against ourselves. Phrases like *I am unworthy or unlovable* damage our sense of self. In stressful moments with others, watch for words that threaten or bully, most likely unintentionally.

The more we take time to consider our words—remembering that they can either damage or nurture, pollute or restore—the more successful we will be at releasing toxic words from our daily lives.

I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.—Matthew 12:36-37

—Amy Ellis

Affirm:

I embrace words of love, compassion, and understanding.

I release loneliness.

Release loneliness! Other, more positive friends are waiting to be admitted at the doorway of your consciousness. That depressing, emotional feeling of loneliness has stayed far too long; it is time for it to be dis-invited and dismissed. This allows friendlier replacements that are only too happy to uplift and see you smile again. Now is the time to release and let go! Time to change the flavor and essence of your domain.

Unconsciously, you may have allowed faith, love, strength, imagination, and enthusiasm to disappear when an unfavorable wind burst through. We must always keep the high watch, making sure everything in our life, world, and affairs remains in divine order.

Lent is the perfect time to release anything or anyone that is not for your highest good and does not make you happy, joyful, and complete. Release loneliness and be at peace!

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

—Marilyn King-Compton

Affirm:

I release loneliness to make room for love and enthusiasm.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

APRIL 6, 2025

Jesus Accepted His Human Reality

Rev. Ellen Debenport

We have watched Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane spending time alone in prayer, resisting then surrendering to his calling. Today, we see him move fully into acceptance. But first, he has to awaken the disciples one last time:

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”—Matthew 26:45-46

Jesus was ready. He knew what was about to happen and he headed into it with open eyes. “Get up, let us be going.” This was not passive acceptance, waiting for whatever came next. He had released all fear. He was saying *let’s go do this*:

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.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.— Matthew 26:47-50

Jesus knew what Judas was doing as he approached but did not push him away or blame or berate him. Jesus was in a state of acceptance.

Those who loved him were not so accepting; the disciples wanted to fight. In all four gospels, someone with Jesus draws a sword and cuts off the ear of a slave who was with the high priest. In John, that person is identified as Peter. In Luke, Jesus heals the ear. In all the gospels, Jesus chastises the action:

Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.—Matthew 26:52

He didn’t want any violence. That was never what his ministry was about. He was ready to comply with the authorities, go through the motions of a trial, and release his physical body. His greatest teaching was yet to come.

Matthew quotes Jesus saying all this had to be done to fulfill the scriptures. That could be true, but he was also fulfilling his life's purpose.

It's easy to believe that finding our true life's purpose is joyful, that suddenly life becomes easier and we only experience good. Jesus' story shows us this is not always the case. Doing what you were born to do may feel blissful at times, but its soul lessons may include some unpleasantness.

One of the many things we learn from the final hours of Jesus' life is that our most excruciating experiences may be the pinnacle of what we came into this life to experience, to learn, or to teach. When we look past Jesus' pain, we see the brilliant, life-changing legacy he left the world.

Jesus showed us the divine potential in ourselves. We can move forward knowing that the same acceptance and courage he had also lives in us, no matter what we are called to go through.

I release anger.

From casual annoyance to feelings of rage, anger may stealthily creep into our lives. We acknowledge that anger may be a call to action or even an alert to danger, yet often our anger results from a bruise or wound we carry being pressed upon by life's experiences.

By acknowledging anger, we begin to understand its source and ignite the process of healing. Releasing anger and any power we have given it allows us to take back this energy and move through the anger toward peace.

As we release anger, we move toward living from our divine nature. As we release anger, we create a space for peace and contentment that allows us to live our days with ease. As we release anger, we are poised to "let all we do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.—James 1:19

—Rev. Karen Romestan

Affirm:

I untether the grasp of anger, and peace flows freely in my life.

I release judgment.

Overcoming our tendency to judge others is not always easy. What is easy is to constantly evaluate how our neighbor is doing, earning, purchasing, or vacationing compared to us.

Traits we judge harshly in others are often the same things we fail to see in ourselves. We may try to distance ourselves by criticizing, but on closer inspection we may find the very behaviors we deplore in others are the same in us. Uncomfortable!

Compassion is impossible when we are filled with judgment. Not only are we unable to see the other with eyes of compassion, we cannot offer ourselves compassion either.

Let's open our hearts and know that we are all spiritual beings having a human experience. Sometimes that experience includes less than attractive behavior—both in “them” and in us.

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?—Matthew 7:3

—Rev. Lulu Logan

Affirm:

I open my hands and my heart and release judgment against others as well as myself.

I release disappointment.

Life can be filled with little disappointments: the bruise that shows up when you cannot recall what you bumped into, getting a speeding ticket just when the speed limit drops on the highway, or not being able to clasp the toy in the claw machine for your kid. These kinds of disappointments seem to pass easily. They require self-compassion in the moment but can soon become a distant memory.

The more challenging disappointments to release are the ones that are closest to our hearts: facing a serious diagnosis, losing a beloved family member, or ending a partnership due to betrayal or lack of trust. Sometimes things happen in life that we would never choose for ourselves.

While disappointment may lead you to wonder how God allowed this to happen, the better approach is to wonder how God is going to see you through. Through prayer, guidance is revealed.

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.—Psalm 55:22

—Rev. Jeanmarie Eck

Affirm:

I pray and trust in God to see me through all circumstances.

I release self-criticism.

Our brains are programmed to look for the negative as a self-preservation mechanism, but that critical vigilance is easily turned on ourselves. We may nitpick our performance at work or lament the parts of our bodies that are aging or in pain, ignoring all the elements of our lives that are working perfectly.

Today, I let go of self-criticism. I begin to see the marvel that I am. I am made perfect in the image and likeness of the Holy. I am a glorious creature worthy of honor and praise. I love myself—I am “feelin’ myself,” as Beyoncé would say. I am grateful for all that I am, all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive. The Christ spirit lives, moves, and breathes in me, as me. I approach the throne boldly, and I bow before me.

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

—Rev. Christina Garza

Affirm:

Today I am fearless, flawless, and fierce.

I release insecurity.

Experiencing high levels of anxiety, lacking confidence, feeling unseen, belittled, and taken advantage of—these feelings fall under the category of insecurity.

If this description looks familiar, there are significant steps you can take to remedy the situation. The first step is to remind yourself that you are a unique, unrepeatable expression of the Divine, made in the image and likeness of God. The “image-likeness” represents the real you. It is your Christ self.

Know that the Christ presence is there to guide you through your daily encounters. Take time to cleanse your mind with denials, releasing the various feelings that represent insecurity. Then affirm the truth of God’s presence.

Release from your thinking and feeling everything that is not a blessing to your life. Fill your thoughts with love as you start your day and think love throughout the day. Then watch what happens!

And you will have confidence, because there is hope.

—Job 11:18

—Rev. Alberta Ware

Affirm:

Awareness of my connection with God keeps me secure.

I release impatience.

An actor who starred in a play in which he portrayed 10 different characters was asked how he managed all the costume changes. He said that being rushed and frantic was ineffective. Instead, he proceeded quietly and deliberately so the show would run as planned.

Trying to force control, dictate terms, or rush a process can result in a loss of harmony and balance. Instead, we can achieve equilibrium by remaining calm, centered, and open. By releasing drives and desires from the personal, human self, we can dissolve tension and connect with divine guidance and order.

In what Unity founders Charles and Myrtle Fillmore called the Silence, we can identify the upset we are feeling, discern the cause of disruption, and realize where we might be interfering. Guidance toward effective action can then come forth. As Myrtle Fillmore said in her book *How to Let God Help You*, “In the Silence, wisdom is given for every need.”

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage.—Psalm 27:14

—Rev. Shirley Knight

Affirm:

I focus on God to calm my haste.



Beginning a Bold Vision

Rev. Teresa Burton

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem, riding a donkey calf while his followers shouted *hosanna* and waved palm branches. It’s such a juxtaposition that this joyous occasion heralds the start of Holy Week, which became the final week of Jesus’ life, culminating in his crucifixion.

What makes it even more amazing is that Jesus knew forces of oppression were gathering around him. With that kind of foreknowledge, who wouldn’t think of turning away? Who wouldn’t consider self-preservation? Yet Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing he could not control others’ actions, how the following days would unfold, or even whether he would survive.

Over the years, we’ve been taught the lessons of the Easter story. It’s humbling and inspiring to learn again and again of Jesus’ last week on earth—his peace and purpose, his love, his acceptance, and the depths of his capacity for forgiveness.

But what can we learn from Palm Sunday? Maybe it’s the lesson that for anything to be accomplished, it must first be begun. That holding a vision of a promise fulfilled keeps us going during our more difficult moments. That the possibility of disappointment and failure need not dampen our joy to start and our willingness to persevere.

Palm Sunday teaches us the power of spiritual living: When we answer the call of our hearts, we grow more fully into awareness of our oneness with God. The matters of the world will eventually fall away for all of us, as they did for Jesus. But as spiritual beings, we will live on, eternally rooted in the truth of God.

We may recognize the Palm Sunday experience playing out in our own lives. We set aside doubts and fears and keep a bold vision. We risk ourselves. We fall in love and open our hearts, acknowledging we may eventually grieve the loss of a relationship. We strike out in pursuit of grand adventures, realizing we may fail. We climb high, knowing we may fall far.

The exhilaration of Palm Sunday *hosannas* does not last. As we struggle and stumble along our path, our dreams may dim. Our failures and defeats may feel like the end of life as we know it.

The story of Palm Sunday reminds us that fear of failure, embarrassment, and even death should not deter us from answering the call of our inner knowing, the voice of Spirit within. This is our divinely inspired call to grow, to stretch, to do the seemingly impossible thing.

If you've ever planted a garden, you already know this. There is joy and positive anticipation in preparing the soil and spreading the seeds. You envision plantings sprouting through the earth's surface, blooming, and growing lush and tall. In those moments, you are not thinking of drought or strong winds, a poor harvest, or the dried leaves and weak roots that signal a garden's eventual death. At the beginning there is hope and potential. And that is enough.

I release attachments.

I admit to finding my joy in other people, my possessions, or the day's events. I sometimes hold on to them as if they are everything! But what if things don't turn out the way I want? I get caught up in my personal feelings, the good and the bad, thinking they are who I am.

But what I really want is to be happy and to stay away from disappointment. So today, I'm letting go of attachments that can cause me pain.

Today, I stop trying to grasp, own, or control the world around me. I release attachments and give myself the freedom to live in this divine "now" moment. As I let go, I allow peace and happiness to flow.

This act cannot be a onetime event. I am committed to releasing attachments as a day-to-day practice. I am willing to be changed at depth.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.—Jeremiah 29:11

—Rev. Robin Volker

Affirm:

I embrace the freedom that comes from releasing attachments. My happiness and peace are assured.

I release weakness.

When I feel I cannot face whatever is before me, I remember that even Jesus needed to take time away in the Garden of Gethsemane to call on God to strengthen him for what he was called to do. Furthermore, he had to remind the disciples who were with him that they were experiencing the weakness of their own resolve to stay awake.

We are never alone, even in our weakness. God is our constant companion. The strength of our inner Christ energy is ever-present to lift us up and carry us through whatever we need to endure or overcome. Through that divine strength, we are able to act with a sense of peace and courage.

Enter your sacred heart space and place your burden on your inner altar. See if you are not lifted up into the awareness that God “has your back” and all is well.

He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.—2 Corinthians 12:9

—Rev. Peggy Konkel

Affirm:

God's strength sustains and moves me with courage, conviction, and fortitude.

I release the idea of separation.

Many spiritual teachers gather their followers together when they know their time on earth is short. These masters share one last message focused on the most important principles they have transmitted to their devotees.

The Master Jesus did so when he brought his disciples together for a final meal the night before his death. The message he shared with them was one of love and oneness. Jesus prayed with his disciples that they would know oneness with him so that they would also know oneness with God.

The only place we can ever be separate from God is in our own minds. When we put on the mind of Christ, the same mind that was in Jesus, we are established in the consciousness of oneness that he shared with his disciples.

I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one.—John 17:23

—Rev. Dale Worley

Affirm:

Established in my divine identity, I am one with God.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

APRIL 17, 2025

I release sadness.

Maundy Thursday commemorates experiences that evoked a wide range of emotions among Jesus' disciples during Passover. Amid their joy and togetherness, there was also betrayal, bewilderment, and deep sadness as they faced the imminent loss of Jesus.

When sadness overwhelms us, we can surrender it at God's table, trusting God's strength and comfort will rise within us. Surrender begins with acknowledging our feelings—we cannot release what we do not acknowledge. By exploring the core of our sadness, we may discover a shift in perspective that frees us from it. Through prayer and meditation, we invite God's peace to wash over us, just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, cleansing them.

Aligning with divine will transforms our heaviness into something purified. Remembering that God's strength is always with us, like a guardian angel, helps us release sadness and embrace peace beyond understanding.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.—Psalm 34:18

—Rev. Juan del Hierro

Affirm:

I am strengthened by God's peace and comfort.

GOOD FRIDAY

APRIL 18, 2025

I release fear.

What do you put your faith in? On Good Friday when Jesus knew he would be crucified, he put his faith in Spirit. Was Jesus afraid at that moment of realization? In his humanness, he had questioned whether his impending death could be bypassed. In his awareness that his mortality was to come to an end, he might have felt alarm at losing his life.

However, in the next moment, he turned to the Divine. Jesus honored what was about to come to pass as vital and in divine order. He trusted his physical death would give way to his greatest triumph.

What if you used this powerful lesson whenever you experience an event that causes you concern? Feel the trepidation of not understanding how a situation could be for your good. But with Jesus as your guiding light, trust the Divine has something even greater in store for you.

So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.—Matthew 10:31

—Rev. Sheree Taylor-Jones

Affirm:

I rise in faith and overcome hurdles.

¶ release limited perceptions.

The day we now call Holy Saturday was a difficult but pivotal time for the followers of Jesus. In the quiet of the Jewish Sabbath, the disciples wept and grieved the loss of their beloved's presence and wisdom. Distraught, they may have wondered, *How can we go forward?* and *What terrible things might happen next?*

Sunday's resurrection would validate Jesus' teachings and release them from their perception of hopelessness. Their faith would be bolstered and paths forward revealed.

When we envision ourselves filled with the light and love of God, we are uplifted. Perceptions expand. Our paths become clearer. We can then create and share a renewed view of our world, a perspective that will shine the light of hope to others.

Envisioning positive aspects in life, we rejoice when they appear. We greet each new day with our hearts and consciousness open to awesome new possibilities.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

—Romans 8:28

—Rev. Bronte Colbert

Affirm:

Filled with the light of God, I expand my perceptions.



A Reason to Believe in Life

Rev. Teresa Burton

At the end of every growing season, as the days shorten and the air cools, the garden withers. Flowers droop and lose their color. Lush vegetation dries out before turning brittle. The garden dies.

Before there can be a new garden in that space, the old vegetation will be cleared out, and in its place will be barren earth. Rains may come, even frost and snow, and new life may feel far away.

But the days will once again grow longer, the air warm, and it will be time to imagine new life growing in that space, verdant and bountiful. The process begins again—the planting, the tending, and the nurturing of the new garden.

Doesn't this describe the cycle of loss, the void, and the new life that plays out in so many ways over the course of our lives? We rarely determine the timetable, but we can trust the process.

We can take comfort in the Easter story and find inspiration in the example Jesus left for us. He led an important, impactful life on earth, but Jesus' greatest gift was given to us when he left the earthly plane. He demonstrated the fullness of his divinity and promised that we may know our own.

Like a garden that bears its fruit in season, Jesus left us with his teachings, his example to emulate, and his message of love and peace to bring into the world. Like the garden that eventually stops growing and withers, Jesus' earthly mission reached its end when his body died. But, just as those who found the empty tomb realized, we can discover that life is eternal even as form changes.

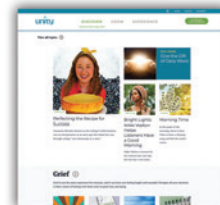
Throughout our ongoing and sometimes overlapping cycles of loss, void, and renewal, the Easter story gives us reason to believe in life. We see the cyclic nature of a garden's growth—planting, tending, harvesting, dying. The impermanence of physical life need not scare us or keep us from living fully. Indeed, it is a call to life, a call to reap and sow, and to be present to all life has to offer. When we can do that, we can better know the glory of the resurrection calling us to the promise of new life.

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