



Global Refuge

Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service

Dear partners in the work of welcome,

For so many, Lent has always been a time of curated wilderness – a time of disciplined fasting. Whether you take on an additional spiritual or well-being practice, or you cast off a habit you could do without, the journey toward the resurrection of our Lord provides an annual opportunity to bring ourselves into closer reflection on God's love, and how it plays out day to day.

This year, some of this wilderness has been curated unwillingly. Thousands of children and families in care of Global Refuge have experienced a cut in funding that supports vital services. Lutheran affiliated agencies, like Global Refuge, have been maligned with negative press and misinformation. Though in some cases, these are only words, in many cases these developments cause real harm to people in our communities.

As we enter the journey of Lent, may these new hardships be cast in the light of a coming Easter. Just as our chosen disciplines build our anticipation of the risen Christ, heightening our spiritual journey through Lent, so too may the challenges of recent events sharpen our perception of all the ways that God sustains us.

This **Lenten Devotional** has weekly stories from supporters and staff of Global Refuge for you to read and ponder, as well as daily reflection questions and prayers to engage with throughout these next 40 days.

May God use our hands, our feet, and our voices to relay hope of the resurrection – a message of innate human worth and justice that is within reach – to all our neighbors and siblings. May the God of all nations work through us to hold fast to the hope that love will prevail. May God instill in you this Lent an unshakeable faith that no matter how harrowing the path ahead may be, Easter always comes at the end of Lent.

God bless you this Lenten journey,



Pastor Dan Beirne
Global Refuge Director for Mobilization & Faith Relations

*God is our refuge and
strength, a very present
help in trouble. – Psalm 46:1*

Transfigure us to be



Community members, along with friends and families welcomed from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, join one another in the community garden as part of Global Refuge's Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) in Fargo, N.D.

A Lenten Text: Luke 9:28-36

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus[a] took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking about his exodus, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep, but as they awoke they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not realizing what he was saying. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen;[b] listen to him!" 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

A Reflection by Karla Leitzman (Philanthropic Advisor and ELCA Seminarian - Global Refuge)

There is a lot to think about in the story of the transfiguration of Jesus. At the command from God, "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him," Jesus transforms before the eyes of his disciples, his clothes becoming dazzling white. What an astounding moment this must have been—and then, seeing Jesus with Elijah and Moses, which serves as a reminder that what is ancient is always made new, that everything is connected.

Our call to welcome the strangers and the travelers is not new. Throughout the Old Testament, dozens of commandments are repeated to welcome the foreigners, the visitors, the immigrants. We hear Jesus' call to serve and to love.

Sometimes I wish that, as Christians, we went out of our way to celebrate the life of Jesus more. Don't get me wrong, thanks be to God that we celebrate His death and resurrection. And yet, I think we must celebrate the ministry He shared during His short life. Jesus begins His life as a refugee, born to a Palestinian teen mom, in a time of intense Roman imperialism.

Forced to flee to Egypt, Jesus begins His life as a foreigner with His parents, leaving all that is familiar to travel to a new land in hopes for safety and prosperity. Sending Jesus to Earth is the embodiment of God's love. Throughout the Old Testament, God commands that the strangers be welcomed, and with the birth of Jesus, God affirms that God's Son not only comes to Earth to be with refugees, but as a refugee himself.

During this season of Lent, as we make our journey to the cross with Jesus Christ, we do so together in community. We are not the first to make this journey, nor will we be the last, binding us together in Christian community across time and space. As we travel this road, may we continue to affirm that we are saved so that we might in turn serve and love those the world pushes to the margins.



At Global Refuge, the old is continually made new. For 85 years and continuing today and far beyond, we celebrate our Lutheran roots in accompanying and welcoming the stranger, of living out our vocational calling to celebrate Christ's sacrifice for us so that we may in turn give that care and welcome to those who need it most.

God of all that is new and all that is ancient, transfigure us to be your beloved community, convicting us to make real your kingdom of justice, peace, mercy, love, joy, and abounding welcome here on Earth. As you worked through Elijah, Moses, and Jesus before us, work too through us.

Daily Questions and Prayers

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

When is a time when you felt like you were welcomed into a new community? How did it feel? Where did you experience God's welcome?

God of Elijah, Moses, Jesus, and so many others, we celebrate the ways we are connected with one another. Help us to remember that we are connected, too, with refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers. Amen.

MONDAY

Think about a time when you practiced empathy and went out of your way to imagine someone else's circumstance. How did you feel yourself transform?

God of transfiguration, you make all things new. We give you thanks for your transforming grace. Remind us that no matter what we do, it is never too late to turn to you. Amen.

TUESDAY

With the theme of transfiguration in mind, reflect on a time when you, or something you were a part of, underwent a significant change. In what ways did that change illuminate aspects of who you are, and in what ways did it cloud aspects of who you are?

O Lord who dwelt on the mountain to Peter, James and John, help us to see you even in our doubt. When we are consumed by the noise of daily life, grant us the wisdom and attentiveness to behold you in that noise. Help us to observe you among us, and to carry that hope into the world. Amen.

ASH WEDNESDAY – DAY 1

If you were to find yourself atop a mountain with God, what affirmation would your heart yearn for? “You are loved.” “You are forgiven?” “You got this?” “Stop doing that.” What would you hope for God to say to you?

God of love, thank you for affirming so clearly your love and parenthood over Jesus. As so many of us struggle with belonging, feeling loved, and even feeling welcome in our own families, please open our own arms to welcome and accept and love all your children. Use us to affirm your love to all those around us. Amen.

DAY 2

After the transfiguration, James, Peter, and John wanted to set up camp and stay on the mountain where God appeared. Jesus urges them to move on and go back down the mountain. Why? What might have been problematic about His followers' desire to stay there?

God of all people, send us into the world to proclaim your love unconditionally. No matter where your people are, or what they are going through, give us courage to depart the mountain top of encounters with You, and bring the assurance of your presence into the world around us. Amen.

DAY 3

What is the significance of Moses and Elijah's appearance to you? It could have been impactful enough for Jesus to become transfixed in light... why include Moses and Elijah too? What is God saying by placing them beside Jesus and saying, "Listen to my son?"

God of all time, help us to remember that there is no "God of the Old Testament" and "God of the New Testament;" you are the same God now and forever. In the same way that you spoke to your people through Moses and Elijah in their times, speak to us today. Manifest your presence beside us today and show us your love. Amen.

DAY 4

Jesus Christ endured difficulties much like those that modern immigrants find themselves in – fleeing their country for fear of persecution, wandering dangerous desert crossings for seemingly endless days, being rejected even by the religious elite, parents who feared for your safety even as you were being born. How does this shape your understanding of God?

Christ who walked this Earth, we recognize that you suffered in ways that are similar to suffering that takes place today. Give us wisdom to not distance ourselves from your passion by polishing it too much with our adoration. This Lent, help us to grieve your suffering on our behalf and all suffering, carrying with us the unshakable hope that You will rise again. And may this hope compel us to pursue healing and justice for those who suffer today. Amen.



A Family from Syria arrives in Fargo, North Dakota, welcomed by Global Refuge staff and the Kurdish community.

A Lenten Text: Isaiah 58:6-12

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

A Reflection by Pastor Katy McCallum Sachse (Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Kirkland, WA)

In 2016, our congregation embarked on the journey of welcoming a refugee family. For months we prepared, researched, raised funds, and gathered volunteers, all guided by the conviction that God was calling us to welcome the stranger, to love our neighbor – in other words, to loose the bonds of injustice. We had much to offer and a deep desire to make a real difference, even one family at a time.

Since then, we have worked with refugee families from all over the world. We have learned about the injustices refugees face globally, as well as about the many inequities in our systems at home. We have made mistakes, adjusted course, stretched far beyond our own knowledge, and wept with tears of grief and of deep joy. The work is often hard, invisible, and requires a strong dose of stubbornness. The bonds of injustice are tied in nearly intractable knots.

There's no question that this work has changed the lives of the families we have been privileged to welcome. New homes, new schools, new activities, and new friendships have impacted every moment of their lives. We have welcomed them into our homes, and they have welcomed us into theirs. They are not problems to be solved, or issues to be legislated; they are beautifully created human siblings, loved by God, and it is a joy to walk with them.

We couldn't begin to list the lessons we have learned, but Isaiah actually foretold the most important one. Did you notice that in Isaiah's words, when you, "share bread with the hungry and bring the poor into your house," your own healing springs up quickly? Your light rises in the darkness and your gloom lifts like the noon of the day.

It turns out that confronting injustices, working to loose their bonds, and persisting in the daily, obstinate details of welcome aren't just acts of healing the stranger – those very acts are healing us, too. Each time we loose a bond of injustice we find ourselves more tightly bound to each other, and those ties are healing us all. One family, one volunteer, one committee, one congregation at a time.

I know we have helped change the lives of these families. I know there is so much more work to do. But I also know that this work changes everyone, heals everyone, waters every garden, and rebuilds every ruin. Every act of loosing injustice is also an act of healing. Every moment of welcome opens all the hearts in the room. God continues to call us into the love of neighbor and the dismantling of injustice – not just for the sake of the world, but for our sake too.

Daily Questions and Prayers

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT – DAY 5

How have you experienced healing when you have helped someone else?

Lord, make me an instrument of healing, both to myself and to others. Give me the strength to remember that you have called me to do good in this world. Amen.

DAY 6

What bonds of injustice are you most determined to loose in your community?

What is one thing you will do today toward that goal?

God, compel us to repair the breaches of suffering. Even when the work is hard, bless us with a healthy dose of stubbornness and fortitude to loosen the tight knots of injustice. Amen.

DAY 7

How has your community been changed for the better by the arrival of new people and traditions?

Holy One, bless all who flee their homelands in hopes of a better life. Give us strength to open our arms wide in joyful welcome. Amen.

DAY 8

Loosing the bonds of injustice often means letting go of our preconceived ideas about others. What idea do you need to let go of?

Patient God, illuminate to me the things you are calling me to let go of. You see the full and beautiful humanity of all people; work through me to do the same. Amen.

DAY 9

Remember a time when you were welcomed by someone else. How did that welcome change you?

God, we remember that you did not just send Jesus to be with refugees, but you sent your son to Earth to become a refugee himself. Help us remember that his face is present in all who flee the familiar to traverse the unknown with a fierce hope that there are better days to come. Amen.

DAY 10

Many across our planet are crying for help with millions displaced across the globe. What are some actions you could take on behalf of those who are crying out in our world today?

God who hears, you listen to our every cry. Embolden us to be the listening ear and the helping hands for all in need of your grace and mercy. Amen.

DAY 11

The psalmist declares, "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday." How are you letting your light shine in the world?

May the LORD guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong. May your service to others feed you like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Amen.

Generations will call me blessed



Children of a recently arrived refugee family from the Democratic Republic of the Congo are welcomed to St. John's Lutheran Church in Fargo, N.D.

A Scripture Passage: Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

 Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

 and holy is his name;

50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him

 from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;

 he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones

 and lifted up the lowly;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things

 and sent the rich away empty.

54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

A Reflection by Elizabeth Mukasa (Global Refuge Training and Programs Officer)

Waiting has never been my strong suit. As a child, one of the hardest things for me to do was wait. My impatience often led me to wander into things and places I was not meant to be—a step into a cold mud puddle or something even worse. My only deterrent was my mother's ever watchful eye, that brought new meaning to the phrase "if only looks could kill."

The only remedy to my impatience was to trust that the wait would be over and then a moment of rejoicing, calm and rest. If you are anything like me and you made it this far into the Lent season and the devotional, it means that you have worked through a lot of waiting and longing. Hopefully, with no threatening looks to keep you in check.

Our reading points to Mary's waiting and Israel's longing. The longing for a Messiah, the one who all the great Prophets had prophesied about. As Israel was going through the pangs of waiting, there was chaos surrounding God's chosen people. Then, in the midst of these dark times, an angel appears to Mary with somewhat Good news... you are expecting a child! (Somewhat.) But this is no ordinary child. This is Jesus the Messiah (the good news)! Jesus was going to be born.

So what happens when the wait is over? The hope of the world is here...but God wants to use a human to bring this hope into the world... What happens when we are asked to not only stop waiting but participate in working alongside God to bring about this great news! Do we humbly accept the call and rejoice in song, or do we hide and wonder why working alongside God costs us?

Luke records Mary's song and in it, we see a rejoicing like no other, Mary participates in prophesying that this is good news! Jesus will be a blessing to her, that she will be called, favored or blessed or, even better, to be envied (see Greek)! Jesus will be a blessing to future generations.

As we reflect on the beauty of Lent and as many honor the incarnation of our savior with the Feast of Annunciation, I am reminded that the blessing of a Savior is for whosoever believes. Just as God so loved the world, God's love was proved by opening the doors for anyone who would believe. In a world that chooses discrimination, hate, bigotry, we at Global Refuge choose the welcome modeled by our Savior's love for all.

Our work of welcome is for all, and we rejoice because we get to participate and work alongside God in the world. Hopefully, through this work, many generations will be blessed. As we receive welcome and comfort in Christ, we too are called to extend the same welcome and comfort to others. Extending welcome, just as we have been welcomed by Love.

The wait is over! Just like Mary, we are called to participate in God's work! Let us rejoice!

Daily Questions and Prayers

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT – DAY 12

When have you experienced a season of waiting that required trust in God's timing? How did you respond when the waiting was over?

God of promise, in our seasons of waiting, remind us that your timing is perfect. Give us hearts that trust, and when the wait is over, give us joy to embrace your calling. Amen.

DAY 13

How is God calling you to participate in bringing hope and welcome to others today?

Loving God, you welcomed us first. Help us to extend that same welcome to others, sharing your love with the world around us. Amen.

ANNUNCIATION FEAST – DAY 14

Just like Mary's visit from the angel, sometimes visits from angels come with news that may not always feel like good news. What areas in the work of welcome cause you anxiety? Fear?

God who quells all fears, on this Annunciation Day, may we take courage like Mary to live in your will and walk in your ways. Embolden us to participate in your holy work in the world. Amen.

DAY 15

God loves and welcomes all to the table. Are there ways that we could be more inclusive in our tables of welcome?

God of welcome, strengthen our arms so we might open them wide in welcome. Continue to be with us as we build a bigger table of inclusion and joy. Amen.

DAY 16

God's work on earth often involves God using everyday people to bring about God's will. What ways can you be more available to this call?

Holy Spirit, you have called countless people before me to do good work here on Earth. Work through me as you did them to make your kingdom of justice, mercy, joy, and love here on Earth. Amen.

DAY 17

How might you choose the welcome modeled by our Savior's love for all, welcoming refugees and immigrants into your life?

God of redemption, give strength to all who are wading through the waters of fear and uncertainty as they make their arduous journeys in hope of a better life. May we represent your welcome here on Earth. Amen.

DAY 18

How can you challenge stereotypes or negative perceptions surrounding refugees and advocate for all people to be seen as beloved children of God?

God of Life, I honor and remember that immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are deeply loved by you. Work through me so that I may be an embodiment of that love. Amen.

God's Abundance



Emillie Binja, a former refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was resettled by the Global Refuge network in 2017 and welcomed by St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington. Six years later, she was ordained as a solo pastor in Oregon.

A Lenten Text: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

26 "When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess and you possess it and settle in it, 2 you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3 You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' 4 When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, 5 you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. 6 When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, 7 we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.'

8 The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; 9 and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.' You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. 11 Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

A Reflection by Pastor Dan Beirne (Director of Mobilization and Faith Relations)

I have a delightful memory of officiating a wedding in the late Spring of 2021. COVID-19 was finally loosening its grip on large social gatherings, vaccines were more readily available, the weather was clearing, and this soon-to-be-wed couple had the confident optimism that the wedding they had put off would finally be able to take place.

Everyone was electric with excitement.

Excitement for the marriage of this couple they loved, yes of course, but there was also excitement because this was the first big party anyone had attended for at least two years. There was a collective sense of relief and joy as we fell back into one another's clutches as a community.

I recall during the reflection I gave during the ceremony, I commented on how truly good it felt to be together. "It is good to be together," I said. This is something I'm sure I've said at many a gathering, including many a Sunday. But, this time it felt different. I left a long pause as folks smiled and nodded, looking around taking it all in with me (or wondering how long my pause was going to run...)

And then I said "Every wedding should feel like you've been waiting for an eternity to get together. Every wedding should feel like we've finally found one another again, and that it was love that made it happen."

Of course, in that time in history, it really truly was what felt like an eternity since we felt like we could all gather together again in the way we did. It felt novel, overdue, and exhilarating. It's a feeling I try to recall for myself whenever I'm with family or a community I'm blessed to be a part of.

I try to invoke this feeling of "Thank God we're together again."

I think this same phenomenon is behind the instruction in Deuteronomy 26. "When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you...take some of the first fruits of all that you produce...put them in a basket...[and] go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name." Verses 1-11 in this chapter of Deuteronomy tell a story of a wandering people, being mistreated and being subjected to hard labor. They cried out to the Lord, and God delivered them to "a land flowing with milk and honey."

I imagine when they ultimately arrived at that land after the suffering and waiting they'd endured, it felt overwhelmingly powerful. The first sip of milk, or taste of honey...the first morning they woke up and realized they needn't fear persecution any longer. Those tastes and sentiments must have felt so novel, overdue and exhilarating.

And, so that they would never lose sight of how good it felt to be delivered, they're instructed to give the first fruits of any goodness they receive directly to God. It's a form of giving thanks to God that almost simulates waiting; it sharpens your appetite for the second bite, invoking the novelty of the first moments in the land of milk and honey, and heightening the gratitude with which you receive it.

This way, one never forgets how truly good the gifts are that God has given us. Perhaps we could practice the same.

Daily Questions and Prayers

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT – DAY 12

When have you experienced a moment of reunion or restoration that felt like a long-awaited gift?

Faithful God, you have led us through seasons of waiting into moments of joy. May we never take for granted the gift of being together in your love. Amen.

DAY 13

What are the "first fruits" in your life that you can offer back to God in thanksgiving?

God of deliverance, just as you led your people to a land of promise, you continue to lead us today. Help us to trust your timing and rejoice when the waiting is over. Amen.

DAY 14

How does the act of waiting shape your appreciation for what you receive?

Holy One, in moments of reunion and celebration, let us recognize your presence. May our hearts be filled with gratitude for the gift of community and belonging. Amen.

DAY 15

In what ways do you recognize God's faithfulness in your personal or communal journey?

Prayer Generous God, keep us from forgetting the blessings we once longed for. Let each day be an opportunity to remember and give thanks for your goodness. Amen.

DAY 16

How can you create moments that remind you and others of the joy of being together?

Loving Creator, help us cherish the beauty of togetherness. May we always say with joy, "Thank God we are together again." Amen.

DAY 17

What practices help you keep the sense of wonder and gratitude alive in your daily life?

God of wonder, renew our sense of awe for the gifts you give. Let us never grow weary of gratitude, but always find fresh joy in your blessings. Amen.



DAY 18

Seeking new beginnings in a foreign land takes immense courage and strength. In times of difficulty, where do you find your strength?

Thank you, God, for the strength that comes from sabbath and rest. Remind me to prioritize care and grace for myself so I might do the same for others. Amen.

Restore me to joy



A Venezuelan family welcomed through Border Servant Corps peer out at the cloud-covered sky.

A Scripture Passage: Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

A Reflection by Dr. Tala AlRaheb (Global Refuge Impact & Innovation Officer)

"The seed of socialness was planted in my heart," a phrase that Kul, a case manager at Global Refuge's Fargo Field Office, used to summarize why he joined Global Refuge in the work of welcome. After fleeing violence in his home country, Kul lived for 20 years in a refugee camp in Nepal. Kul explains that, through his own personal trials, his heart was drawn to helping others and showing them compassion.

During this Lenten season, we too are invited to reflect on our own hearts and what they are drawn to. Psalm 51, David's Psalm of lament, invites the reader to lament on our own iniquities and encourages us to seek God's mercy in the renewal of our hearts and spirits. Throughout the Psalm, but particularly in verses 1-2 & 10-12, the psalmist is requesting a complete reordering of life; a life that is cleansed and washed of sin. The psalmist, however, recognizes that such a task cannot be done without God's grace.

In verses 1-2, The psalmist creates a contrast between God's heart and the human heart. The Psalm begins by emphasizing God's mercy, unfailing love, and great compassion. In verses 10-12, we see that David requests that God, through God's presence and the Holy Spirit, transform his heart to be made anew. In this Psalm of lament, we are called to be radically changed to be more merciful, compassionate, and steadfast in our spirits.

For many, this Lenten season comes at a time of personal trial. Our hearts might be aching and raging at the injustices around us. While Psalm 51 invites us to lament the current state of the world and its brokenness, it emboldens us to be transformed into the *Imago Dei* by loving boldly and remaining steadfast in our works of mercy. For us at Global Refuge, this has taken on various forms. We have remained steadfast in our commitment to stand with new Americans as they build their lives in the US, we have shown mercy to the stranger, and we have showered those fleeing persecution with love and compassion.

As you reflect on Psalm 51 during this season of lent, ask: "What might it look like to have mercy and compassion for newcomers in MY community?" As we contemplate about our renewal this Lenten season, may we be renewed in our steadfastness and transformed into a new creation that has the seeds of welcome planted on our hearts.

Daily Questions and Prayers

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT – DAY 19

What personal experiences have shaped your heart toward mercy and compassion?

Merciful God, plant within me a heart that reflects your love. May my spirit be renewed so that I can offer kindness and compassion to all. Amen.

DAY 20

In what ways do you feel called to welcome and support newcomers in your community?

God of refuge, help me to see newcomers as you see them—beloved and worthy of welcome. Open my heart to extend love and mercy in tangible ways. Amen.

DAY 21

How does Psalm 51 challenge you to seek renewal in your heart and spirit?



Holy One, cleanse my heart and make it new. Let your steadfast spirit guide me in the work of justice and hospitality. Amen.

DAY 22

When have you experienced God's mercy in a way that transformed your perspective or actions?

Loving God, when I grow weary, remind me of your unfailing love. Strengthen my spirit so that I may remain steadfast in mercy. Amen.

DAY 23

What injustices weigh heavily on your heart this Lenten season, and how might God be calling you to respond?

God of transformation, take my lament and turn it into action. May I be a vessel of your grace for those who seek safety and belonging. Amen.

DAY 24

How can you remain steadfast in love and compassion, even when faced with hardship or resistance?

Creator God, renew in me a heart that beats with compassion. Let me be a sign of your welcome to those in need. Amen.



DAY 25

What small seeds of welcome can you plant today that might grow into lasting change for others?

Spirit of hope, may the seeds of welcome take root in my life. Let my love for others reflect the boundless love you have shown me. Amen.



The lost are found



On World Refugee Day 2023, Global Refuge staff, volunteers, and supporters participated in 90 meetings on Capitol Hill in person and virtually.

A Lenten Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 So he told them this parable:

11 "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of

hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

A Reflection by The Rev. Eric C. Shafer (Global Refuge Pastor in Residence)

The story of the Prodigal Son, found in Luke 15:11-32, is a powerful parable that illustrates themes of repentance, forgiveness, and unconditional love. It recounts the journey of a wayward son who leaves his father's home, squanders his inheritance in reckless living, and ultimately returns home in despair, only to be warmly embraced by his forgiving father. This story, while timeless in its message,

can offer poignant insights when viewed through the lens of the immigrant and refugee experience.

Imagine the Prodigal Son as a migrant, leaving his homeland in search of better opportunities or fleeing from hardship. His decision to leave home, driven by a mix of adventure and desperation, mirrors the difficult choices faced by many immigrants and refugees today. They leave behind the familiarity of home, culture, and family, often with heavy hearts and uncertain futures, in the hopes of finding safety, stability, and a better life.

Just as the Prodigal Son found himself in a distant country, struggling and yearning for the comfort of home, many immigrants and refugees find themselves in foreign lands, grappling with the challenges of adaptation, language barriers, and socio-economic hardships. They might experience feelings of isolation, discrimination, and a sense of not belonging, much like the Prodigal Son when he reached his lowest point, desiring even the food of the swine he tended.

However, the turning point in the Prodigal Son's story is his realization and repentance. He acknowledges his mistakes and decides to return home, hoping for forgiveness. This moment of humility and the subsequent embrace by his father illustrate the power of grace and the open-hearted welcome that many immigrants and refugees hope to find in their new communities. The father's reaction, filled with compassion and unconditional love, serves as a model for how societies should treat those who seek refuge and new beginnings among them.

Today we are called to be like the father in the parable – to offer a compassionate welcome to immigrants and refugees. This involves not just providing physical needs such as shelter, food, and security, but also extending emotional and spiritual support. It means acknowledging their struggles, celebrating their courage, and integrating them into the fabric of our communities with love and respect.

Churches and faith communities play a crucial role in this integration. By embracing the teachings of the Prodigal Son, they can become sanctuaries of hope and love for those who have been uprooted from their homes.

The story of the Prodigal Son, when viewed in the context of immigrants and refugees, challenges us to reflect on our own attitudes and actions towards those who come to our shores seeking a fresh start. It calls us to move beyond fear and prejudice, to see the humanity in each person, and to respond with the same open-hearted grace that the father showed to his wayward son. In doing so, we embody the true essence of Christ's teachings – to love our neighbors as ourselves, regardless of where they come from.

Daily Questions and Prayers

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT – DAY 26

God has called you to let your light shine, sharing your first fruits with the world. What gifts can you share with your community?

God of community, thank you for the myriad of gifts that you bless each one of us with. Help me remember and celebrate that I am unique, beautifully and wonderfully made, just as all your children are. Amen.

DAY 27

Abundance is a gift from God and we should all take time to celebrate the bounty our Lord provides. How do you resist notions of scarcity in a world where there is more than enough to go around?

God, thank you for a love and grace that surpasses all human understanding. I will rejoice that you claim me as a dearly loved child of God and share the many blessings you provide with all in need of loving care. Amen.

DAY 28

Where in your community do you see those seeking a place to call home? How might you share in celebration of God's abundance with them?

God of comfort, bless me with compassion to understand and appreciate all of the ways newcomers contribute to communities around the world. As you are with us in our pathways to the cross in this season, make your presence known to all who journey, celebrating that while we may not know where our paths will lead, you are with us. Amen.

DAY 29

Jesus' disciples and others did not understand much of what he shared with them until after his resurrection. Have you ever experienced a realization about what God was communicating to you after the fact?

Christ beside me, help me to remember that you are always with me even when I may not understand your motivation. I trust that you will lead and guide me to help me share your welcome. Amen.

DAY 30

Reflecting on your own experiences, when have you felt like you been lost and how did those experiences shape your understanding of God's love and salvation?

God of Presence, even though you do not promise me easy days or days without challenges, you do promise you are always with me. I take comfort in this knowledge and pray your presence be made known to all who need your reassurance. Amen.

DAY 31

Jesus reminds us that salvation is not found in worldly success but in our love for others and faith in God. How might this message impact your priorities and actions in daily life?

God, forgive me for all that I take for granted. I give thanks for your grace, compassion, love, mercy, and welcome. Amen.

DAY 32

For refugees and immigrants who have traversed such treacherous roads in search of a better life, how might we accompany them in their journeys and healing?

God of peace, empower me to share your love and care to those who need it most. Work in me to accompany the marginalized and oppressed. Amen.



A Venezuelan family welcomed through Border Servant Corps peer out at the cloud-covered sky.

A Scripture Passage: John 13:1-17

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already decided[a] that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,[b] but is entirely clean. And you[c] are clean, though not

all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers[d] greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

A Reflection by Deacon Sarah Kretschmann (Global Refuge Congregational Engagement Specialist)

The story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet is unique to John, a gospel that pays particular attention to the importance of embodied faith and relationships.

Throughout John, Jesus addresses thirsty bodies in his conversation with the woman from Samaria (John 4), ill bodies as he heals in Jerusalem (John 5), hungry bodies at the feeding of the five thousand. (John 6) And tonight Jesus embodies for the disciples what serving all the needs of our neighbors should look like.

By lovingly washing their feet, Jesus challenges the disciples to do likewise, to embody the good news for those who need not only to hear it, but to experience it as their full selves. At our best, for those we encounter in the world, Jesus teaches us that we are to be an embodiment of the Gospel, the good news.

In our Gospel text for today, Jesus commands his disciples and calls us to love one another. He says, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." So how did Jesus demonstrate love throughout this story?

Jesus loved by showing generous hospitality. Jesus loved through service. Jesus loved by uplifting the work of those who many did not pay attention to.

I cannot think of a ministry which embodies Jesus' unfailing love for people on the margins more than refugee resettlement and immigration work. In a time when the number of people experiencing displacement is higher than ever and newcomers are continually villainized, Jesus calls us to love one another. To share hospitality, to love through service, to uplift the work of those who are forgotten or despised.

The reality is that our world today does not reflect the message of Jesus in John. Many programs and systems that supported the displaced and embodied a spirit of service have been abruptly ended. These endings have been painful and life-altering.

But John reassures us, "Having loved his own who were in the world, [Jesus] loved them to the end." Jesus loves us not only to the end, but through the end. Even when we walk out on Jesus like Judas. Even when we choose not to be in relationship with God. Even when we do not love one another as we should. Jesus loves us anyway and keeps inviting us in. Into relationship. Into closeness with him. Into loving community with one another.

Jesus loves us through the end of the world as it is plagued by brokenness and hatred that separates us from our neighbors – through all the endings that must happen before new life can begin. Before moments of resurrection, there are often Good Friday and Holy Saturday times. Times of grief, of pain, of endings. It sure feels like we are in one of those times. But all the way to resurrection, Jesus loves and keeps loving us into a better tomorrow.

May you feel God's love for you this Holy Week. And just as Jesus has loved you, may you love one another and all those beyond the church walls embodying the good news in a world that so desperately needs it. May you love like Jesus, to and through the endings into new life together. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT – DAY 33

How has Jesus' example of washing the disciples' feet shaped your understanding of love and service?

Servant King, you knelt to wash the feet of your disciples—help me to love and serve others with that same humility and grace. May my actions reflect your gospel of love. Amen.

DAY 34

In what ways can you embody the good news in your daily life, beyond just words?

Jesus, you embodied love in word and deed—teach me to do the same. Let my hands and heart be open to those in need. Amen.

DAY 35

Where do you see the need for generous hospitality in your community, and how might you respond?

Jesus, you welcomed the outcast and the stranger with open arms. Make our hearts and communities places of true hospitality. Amen.

DAY 36

What are some “endings” in your life or the world that feel painful, and how might Jesus’ love carry you through them?

Lord, when the world feels broken and full of endings, remind me that your love carries us through. Help me trust in your presence even in the hardest seasons. Amen.

DAY 37

How can you extend radical hospitality to those who are displaced, forgotten, or in need of welcome?

God of welcome, help me to extend radical hospitality to all, especially to those who feel lost or displaced. May my love be as boundless as yours. Amen.

DAY 38

What barriers keep you from fully loving and serving others, and how can you let Jesus transform your heart?

Jesus, break down the walls in my heart that keep me from loving fully. Teach me to serve without hesitation, just as you did. Amen.



DAY 39

How can you love others “to and through the endings” as Jesus loves us?

Jesus, you love us through grief, pain, and uncertainty. May we, too, love others with a steadfast heart, walking with them through life’s endings and into hope. Amen.

DAY 40

What does resurrection hope look like in your own journey of faith and service?

Lord of new beginnings, as we journey through Holy Week, remind us that love is stronger than death. May we bear witness to your love that leads to resurrection. Amen.



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