

A MORNING RESOLVE

I will try this day to live a simple, sincere, and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God.

In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep, which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right.

And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Savior, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

ABOUT THE COVER: At Saint George's Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio, one window is dedicated to the memory of Absalom Jones, the first African-American person ordained an Episcopal priest. This work of witness reminds us of the truths told by Absalom Jones and the struggles still faced by the church in coming to terms with racism, slavery, and marginalization. Photo by Alexis Fortuna Caoili, used with permission.

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



#ForwardDayByDay

Dear friends in Christ,

As I write this, months before you hold this issue in your hands, the news is full of crisis after crisis. Sometimes it seems that the world is spinning out of control. Of course, it isn't. God is still God, and God's love is still stronger than death.



The power of God's love doesn't mean that we don't suffer, nor does it mean we are off the hook to solve the problems that we create. Rather, it means God accompanies us in our joys and in our sorrows.

Sometimes, the best we can do is know when to work on making a difference and when to work on accepting what is beyond our control. I commend to you a lovely prayer, written by Reinhold Niebuhr.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

This is an essential prayer for our time. Let us all remember that God is sovereign. And let us do the work that God would have us do.

Scott Gunn
Executive Director

Using *Forward Day by Day*

Since 1935, millions of people have used *Forward Day by Day* as a way to spend dedicated time with Jesus, every single day. *Forward Day by Day* inspires people who want to be more like Jesus and encourages them to spread his love in the world. Below, find some helpful hints for how to craft a daily devotional time that will nourish your relationship with Jesus and the world.

READ the daily meditation and accompanying scripture. Think about what God and the author are trying to say or share. Set aside time every day, optimally around the same time of day, to read *Forward Day by Day*.

REFLECT on the other Bible readings appointed for the day. Would you have picked a different reading to write about, if you were the author? You might try writing your own meditations.

RESPOND by sharing something that has changed your perspective with a family member or friend. Pay special attention to the **Moving Forward** section for intentional and explicit ways to amplify your *Forward Day by Day* experience. You can share on social media by using **#ForwardDayByDay**.

PRAY about what is on your heart. Spend some time listening for what may be on God's heart also. Visit the online prayer chapel at www.ForwardMovement.org/prayer.

FOLLOW www.GrowChristians.org, a blog for families who are seeking to grow in faith.

FIND other resources to inspire your journey of discipleship and empower you to share Jesus with the world. Visit www.ForwardMovement.org or call us at 1-800-543-1813.

SATURDAY, August 1

Joseph of Arimathea

Psalm 75:1. *We give you thanks, O God, we give you thanks, calling upon your Name and declaring all your wonderful deeds.*

Ps 75, 76 * 23, 27 | Judges 5:19-31 | Acts 2:22-36 | Matthew 28:11-20

Today's reading from Judges is difficult for me to stomach. Jael assassinates Sisera in what may be the most gruesome act depicted in the Bible, and Deborah and Barak are singing her praises. The scene makes me uncomfortable. I want peace, love, and joy—not combative judgment and retaliation.

I don't enjoy all the God stories I hear. Sometimes I question them, rationalizing and making judgments. There's a common thread, though, and that's what keeps me listening. Every God story I've ever encountered is bound by awe and gratitude.

Jael's story is not mine. I'll resist my urges to fix, heal, or convert her or others. Instead I'll focus on turning to God for guidance and giving thanks and praise when circumstances improve. I will wonder at God's deeds and share my eternal gratitude.

PRAY for the Diocese of Hong Kong Island

MOVING FORWARD: What wonderful deed has God done in your life recently? How are you sharing that good news?

SUNDAY, August 2*9 Pentecost*

Matthew 14:20. *And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.*

*Ps 17:1-7, 16 or Ps 145:8-9, 15-22 | Genesis 32:22-31 or Isaiah 55:1-5
Romans 9:1-5 | Matthew 14:13-21*

Oh Jesus, John the Baptist was beheaded. John—kin by blood and soul. Learning how his death came to be is enough to make you sick. You need to be alone. You know it immediately. You withdraw.

The people keep coming. You've lived and breathed this ministry—and now, when all you want is to be alone—they come asking you for more. You show compassion. You do the work. You give love. Food will not pass through John's throat again but these people are hungry. You fill thousands of empty bellies with nothing but five loaves and two fish.

You'll get your alone time with God. Your soul hungers for it. You'll climb a mountain to get it. Then you'll descend and walk on water to find us, calming our astonished fears.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Matabeleland (Zimbabwe),
Virginia, and Hpa-an (Myanmar)*

MOVING FORWARD: *How do you claim time to heal in the midst of life's demands?*

MONDAY, August 3*Joanna, Mary, and Salome*

Judges 6:39. *Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let your anger burn against me, let me speak one more time; let me, please, make trial with the fleece just once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on the ground let there be dew."*

*Ps 80 * 77, [79] | Judges 6:25-40 | Acts 2:37-47 | John 1:1-18*

The first time I asked God for a sign I was a child. I received an answer and found comfort.

I don't remember asking for more signs until years later, and then I asked for enough signs to make up for lost time. I asked for so many signs I perfected the art of asking. I was specific. I set deadlines. I asked for signs to confirm I had read signs correctly.

Though some of my best God stories are sign stories, I don't believe signs are the only way God communicates. I haven't asked for a sign in years. Holy direction comes through scripture, nature, humans—even billboards!—when I am quiet and still from the inside out, from the Christ-light within me.

I believe God speaks to us differently, hoping we will tell one another. Gideon's story helps me feel less alone.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Matana (Burundi),
Wad Medani (Sudan), and Hyderabad (Pakistan)*

MOVING FORWARD: *What signs have you received from God? How have you responded?*

TUESDAY, August 4

Psalm 78:2. *I will open my mouth in a parable; I will declare the mysteries of ancient times.*

*Ps 78:1-39 * 78:40-72 | Judges 7:1-18 | Acts 3:1-11 | John 1:19-28*

A child went to school.

In science, she studied the scientific method. She was intrigued. In math, formulas developed her desire for balance. History classes taught her to think critically about information sources and consider motivations. Ideas about perspective emerged from books she read, fueling her belief that we are more alike than different.

As she grew, she learned how little she knew. She experienced the weight of facts and wondered at carrying so many. She began to question those who claimed to have all the answers.

When things didn't make sense, she turned to God. "Guide me," she prayed. And she saw signs. Over and over again she made decisions difficult to prove by the scientific method. She began to think about concepts of God critically. She began to erase the formulas she had drawn around God and God grew big enough to swallow up her facts, and that truth set her free.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Matlosane (South Africa) and Waiapu (Aotearoa)

MOVING FORWARD: *When has God swallowed up some of your facts with truth?*

WEDNESDAY, August 5

Psalm 82:8. *Arise, O God, and rule the earth, for you shall take all nations for your own.*

*Ps 119:97-120 * 81, 82 | Judges 7:19—8:12 | Acts 3:12-26 | John 1:29-42*

We're in the midst of difficult political times. Issues, personalities, and positions create fissures in relationships and communities. This environment can feel unmanageable.

Twelve Step recovery programs offer insights in navigating these perils. Participants admit they are powerless and their lives are unmanageable. They come to believe a power greater than themselves can restore them to sanity. Then they make a decision to turn their will and lives over to the care of God as they understand him.

Ironically, the more they surrender to God, the more control they seem to have of themselves.

What surrender to a higher power looks like in practical terms varies. I wonder what the practicalities of turning our political will over to God might look like.

We are God's—children of the Most High.

Arise, O God, and rule the earth, for you shall take all nations for your own.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Mauritius (Indian Ocean), Waikato & Taranaki (Aotearoa), and Wangaratta (Australia)

MOVING FORWARD: *How do you understand God in your life as your higher power?*

THURSDAY August 6

Feast of the Transfiguration

John 21:4. *Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.*

Ps 99 or 99:5-9 | Exodus 34:29-35 | 2 Peter 1:13-21 | Luke 9:28-36

From the Archives: April 27, 1950

Life will come and with it will come our Lord. We shall likely not recognize him. But he finds us at our work and, not obstinate but ready to take a hint, he will give us success.

We Christians are out to catch people. Lately we have not caught many. We work hard at it, desperately hard, but the net comes back empty.

Don't give up. Night is passing. Dawn is breaking. Who is that on the shore? He is the expert. He knows the ways of men. He is calling out directions—"the right side of the ship."

Let us start afresh in his way. There will be a heavy catch. What if the net breaks? We'll mend it—a truer, more captivating Church!

PRAY for the Dioceses of Mbaise and Warri (both in Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: *Do a little research on the history of veils. How does this help you understand them as a metaphor?*

FRIDAY, August 7

John Mason Neale

John 2:4. *And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."*

*Ps 88 * 91, 92 | Judges 9:1-16, 19-21 | Acts 4:13-31 | John 2:1-12*

I can easily behave like Mary, concerning myself with others' affairs.

I nearly lost myself in caregiving. My concern for others gave me tunnel vision, and I stopped tending to my own needs. I became irritable and unreasonable without knowing it. My relationships worsened.

I only developed serenity by the grace of God and with the help of humans. As I learn, I can change. Today I play caregiver and protector for myself. The Serenity Prayer sorts my concerns. I explore my motivations. I allow people the dignity of directing their own lives. And in a surprise twist, practicing detachment has made me a far better mother than meddling ever did.

God, please make clear my concerns for today, and clear my mind of concerns not mine.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Washington, Mbale (Uganda), and Ibadan, Ibadan North, and Ibadan South (all in Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: *Spend time with the Serenity Prayer today.*

SATURDAY, August 8

Dominic

Psalm 136:25-26. *Who gives food to all creatures, for his mercy endures for ever. Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his mercy endures for ever.*

Ps 87, 90 * 136 | Judges 9:22-25, 50-57 | Acts 4:32—5:11 | John 2:13-25

Repetition can have a powerful effect. As hearts beat and lungs breathe, so can words repeated animate our lives. Sanskrit mantras are used in meditation. This is why sacred words are often used in centering prayer. This is why self-help books prescribe daily affirmations.

Reading Psalm 136 aloud, each verse ending with “for his mercy endures for ever,” is a practice of repetition. Repetition builds belief. Beliefs fill the mind, escaping in words. A sound, sent out into the world, is a creation.

There’s benefit to monitoring the words in our lives. What words do you find repeating in your head? How do those repetitions manifest in your life?

PRAY for the Anglican Communion

MOVING FORWARD: *Pray along with the rhythm of Psalm 136 today.*

SUNDAY, August 9

10 Pentecost

Genesis 37:27. *“Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers agreed.*

Ps 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b or Ps 85:8-13 | Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 or 1 Kings 19:9-18
Romans 10:5-15 | Matthew 14:22-33

We don’t get to choose our family of origin. We don’t get to choose emotionally mature parents or a healthy household or siblings. We grow into our circumstances and we grow out of them. They are part of our story.

Joseph’s family relationships are complicated. Members have assigned and assumed roles. They have insecurities and motivations. They have different personalities and experiences. His family sounds a lot like mine. I have brothers from different mothers. Our family is woven together, torn and mended. Some of the most intimate familial relationships I enjoy are with members who do not share my blood. They grew from diverse circumstances and flourish in God’s love.

Please God, give me eyes to see beyond flesh—KINDom come!

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Mbamili (Nigeria)
and Wau and Iba (both in South Sudan)*

MOVING FORWARD: *What does your family of choice look like? How does it mirror your family of origin?*

MONDAY, August 10

Laurence of Rome

John 3:21. *But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.*

*Ps 89:1-18 * 89:19-52 | Judges 12:1-7 | Acts 5:12-26 | John 3:1-21*

I don't recite every word in the liturgy. I struggle with some aspects of the creeds and prayers.

My verbal omissions went largely unnoticed for years. It wasn't until I developed a habit of attending Morning Prayer at a new church that I was called out. I was the only regular attendee. At first the priest thought I was lost in the liturgy. Several months and theological debates later, we still stood together, praying in ways that felt honest to each of us.

I've heard the use of "we" in the Nicene Creed is intentional. Individual beliefs ebb and flow with experience. "We" takes the burden of belief off the individual and allows it to be carried by the community. Many hands make light work.

I am thankful my faith community allows me to speak my truth—even when it sounds like silence.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Mbeere (Kenya),
Wellington (Aotearoa), and Idah (Nigeria)*

MOVING FORWARD: *Are there parts of the liturgy that are hard for you to say? How can you share that difficulty with Jesus?*

TUESDAY, August 11

Clare of Assisi

Psalm 94:18. *As often as I said, "My foot has slipped," your love, O LORD, upheld me.*

*Ps 97, 99, [100] * 94, [95] | Judges 13:1-15 | Acts 5:27-42 | John 3:22-36*

Slippery slopes are dangerous and they can't always be avoided. Literal or figurative, into each life a little rain must fall.

Relationships develop dynamics, mindful or not. Practice develops skills and habits. Conversations without dissent develop confidence. These are slippery slopes. Though it is possible to navigate them safely, a misstep can land you on your back.

A little preparation can go a long way. We can take the time to understand our limitations. We can rest well. We can nurture ourselves. We can avoid known problem areas. We can even opt to stay home. When we are out in the world, we can lean on experience like a walking stick. We can coat our skin with 55+ SPF prayers. We can shield ourselves from the pelting rain with a poncho of God's love. Borrowed shoes can lend new perspectives.

For all our efforts, we can still slip. As often as we say we've slipped, your love, O Lord, upholds us.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Mbhashe (South Africa) and Wernyol (South Sudan)

MOVING FORWARD: *Clare of Assisi was a discalced nun. Find out more about her and what it means to be discalced.*

WEDNESDAY, August 12

Florence Nightingale

Psalm 119:144. *The righteousness of your decrees is everlasting; grant me understanding, that I may live.*

Ps 101, 109:1-4(5-19)20-30 * 119:121-144
Judges 13:15-24 | Acts 6:1-15 | John 4:1-26

I've come to understand the only surefire plan I have in my life is seeking alignment with God's will. Sometimes it doesn't look like I thought it would—but when I am open to guidance, I see it. When I am in alignment, I feel it. God's will is a self-correcting process. God's will is the ultimate decree, and free will is the greatest privilege humans suffer.

Turning my will and my life over to God gives me a chance to regift the greatest gift of all to the best gift giver I know. It lightens my load and allows me to live life more fully. It is the ultimate sacrifice, and it enables trust everlasting.

Bless and block my willful life, God. I don't understand much, but I understand you love me. Weave my will into yours, that your efforts may be strengthened, that I may truly live. Amen.

**PRAY for the Dioceses of Meath & Kildare (Ireland)
and West Ankole and West Buganda (both in Uganda)**

MOVING FORWARD: *What can you decide to do today? How will you invite Jesus to help you?*

THURSDAY, August 13

Jeremy Taylor

Romans 9:28. *For the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively.*

Ps 105:1-22 * 105:23-45 | Judges 14:1-19 | Acts 6:15—7:16 | John 4:27-42

From the Archives: January 27, 1951

What a magnificent declaration of faith this is! Saint Paul had ample opportunity for knowing the danger of things coming in between the soul and God, and it is doubtless out of his own experience that he writes.

Could we make a similar declaration of faith? Doesn't tribulation or distress sometimes come between us and God and leave us with a sense of forsakenness and defeat? Among those who have suffered or have met with great misfortune, probably most have known the "dark night of the soul" when God is no longer real to them. They may have come near to giving up belief in God altogether.

If and when this happens, we must know that God has not failed us: God's love is constant and is always there for us to rest upon.

The emphasis here is on the certainty of God's love. It is for us to hold on to that. Then whatever our experience is—and however hard to bear—we can be "more than conquerors."

PRAY for your own parish.

MOVING FORWARD: *Have you entered into another person's labor? How can you thank them for the work they have done, even if you don't understand it?*

FRIDAY, August 14*Jonathan Myrick Daniels*

Acts 7:19. *He dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die.*

Ps 102 * 107:1-32 | Judges 14:20—15:20 | Acts 7:17-29 | John 4:43-54

I wish this shocked me more. Infanticide, genocide, children used to build economies and satisfy urges. This behavior isn't limited to the past: We still commit atrocities against children of all ages.

How did humankind arrive at such a point? I suppose it started with people seeing "others." Prejudice and bigotry spark fear's flame. Justification fuels the fire. "If this is what you do, I swear I will not stop until I have taken revenge on you," says Samson in our reading from Judges.

Judges, much like Acts, cycles through recurring themes. Reading these books helps me understand why people fear others as they do. It's in our genetic memory. We have interpreted blessings and misfortunes as rewards and punishments for generations.

These theories don't always hold up, though. "Bad" and "good" things happen to all people and most people's behavior is not exclusively "good" or "bad." We are more alike than different.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Melbourne (Australia) and West Missouri

MOVING FORWARD: *Spend significant time with the readings from Judges and Acts during this cycle of readings.*

SATURDAY, August 15*Saint Mary the Virgin*

Galatians 4:6-7. *And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.*

Ps 34 or 34:1-9 | Isaiah 61:10-11 | Galatians 4:4-7 | Luke 1:46-55

I love trying on different understandings of God. I once heard someone describe walking outside in the imagined company of all the great thinkers of history, loved ones here and gone, wisdom known and unknown, as time spent with her higher power.

Recently, I entered the sanctuary of the nature trail behind my home. I stepped onto the trail and went on autopilot, singing thanks and praise to the heavens. A little way down the path, I stopped in my tracks—I could not be in relationship with a being in the heavens. I needed to have someone who could walk with me. I finally saw it—our deeply human need for Jesus.

God speaks to us all differently, hoping we will tell one another the good news. Thanks be to God for the Spirit!

PRAY for the Dioceses of Meru (Kenya), West Malaysia, and Idaho

MOVING FORWARD: *How is God speaking to you right now? How will you share your good news?*

SUNDAY, August 16

11 Pentecost

Isaiah 56:8. *Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.*

*Ps 133 or Ps 67 | Genesis 45:1-15 or Isaiah 56:1,6-8 |
Romans 11:1-2a,29-32 | Matthew 15:(10-20)21-28*

Israel is the new name given Jacob after his wrestling match at Peniel, after he “has seen God face to face.” Studying the etymology of the name is its own wrestling match. Who is the subject? Go a little further in the story, and we see that Israel’s children become just like him—wrestling with God for their blessing.

I am Israel. I am impudent with demands. I am strong, and I am vulnerable. I deceive. I play favorites. I want things to go my way. God meets me with faithfulness.

I am humbled. I build temples. I give thanks and praise. I want to be without sin. I wrestle with God. God meets me with faithfulness.

I share my story. God meets me with faithfulness. I see you there. I will not let you go. Please tell me your name.

PRAY for the Church of Ireland

MOVING FORWARD: *What is your gift and calling? How are you proclaiming it in your life?*

MONDAY, August 17

Judges 17:6. *In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.*

*Ps 106:1-18 * 106:19-48 | Judges 17:1-13 | Acts 7:44—8:1a | John 5:19-29*

When I am hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, my coping mechanisms snap to attention like mice when the cat is gone. I sense judgment from the humans around me, and experience urges me to justify behaviors or explain myself. My response is often out of proportion to the triggering event. If it’s hysterical, it’s historical.

When I operate at my best, I am ruled by the witness of my consciousness. I slow down to take inventory and digest data. I take counsel from my history. I allow emotions to indicate instead of dictate. I give decisions space. I find detachment from outcomes and am rewarded with serenity.

Though they mold my experience of life, I am not my thoughts or choices. I can set them aside and take a break. As I grow in understanding and detachment, I trust God’s vision and perspective more than my own.

God, show me what is right in front of my eyes. Rule my judgments.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Mexico, West Tennessee, and Ideato (Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: *Who helps keep your heart and mind in check? Thank that person today.*

TUESDAY, August 18

William Porcher DuBose

Psalm 121:4-5. *Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep; the LORD himself watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.*

Ps[120], 121, 122, 123*124, 125, 126, [127]|Judges 18:1-15|Acts 8:1-13|John 5:30-47

Attention: Beloved Sheep

From: Israel

Re: Self care

Fellows of The Flock,

I'm wrestling with something. Turns out it's me.

I don't always take care of myself the way I should. Maybe it's old wiring. These parts are cut and spliced by experience, so I have quite a mess on my hands!

My system was overloaded for years. I shorted out often. I let my tank run bone dry more than once. I put oil in my washer fluid reservoir for years before realizing what I was doing.

I'm overhauling my system. I'm learning I don't have to make decisions or take action as quickly as I once thought I did. I'm learning to give space for God to provide. I have been taking more naps.

How are you?

PRAY for the Dioceses of Michigan and West Texas

MOVING FORWARD: *One of the practices of the Way of Love is rest. How will you engage in holy rest this week?*

WEDNESDAY, August 19

John 6:12. *When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."*

Ps 119:145-176 * 128, 129, 130 | Judges 18:16-31 | Acts 8:14-25 | John 6:1-15

Prudence is not often born of abundance. Or is it?

Jesus doesn't travel with stockpiles of food. He has sandals and a robe, at the least. He's not identified by his material possessions. I have never considered Jesus lacking, though. He oozes abundance. Perhaps his abundance looks different than the abundance I've been taught to see.

His is the kind of abundance you can take to a cross—the kind that will carry you through your final agonized moments of life to the abundance of death.

We stockpile to prepare for fearful events, but Jesus shows us that when we pay attention to the miracles around us, even the broken pieces can nourish us. God bless Jesus for gathering the fragments.

Waste not, want not.

***PRAY for the Dioceses of Milwaukee,
West Virginia, and Western Ison (Nigeria)***

MOVING FORWARD: *What abundance can you bring to a need in your community?*

THURSDAY, August 20

Bernard of Clairvaux

1 Samuel 16:4-5. *Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"*

*Ps 131, 132, [133] * 134, 135 | Job 1:1-22 | Acts 8:26-40 | John 6:16-27*

From the Archives: March 3, 1951

It is strange how blind we can be to the consequences of sin and how alert to the imagined consequences of obedience. We most often think we can beat the certain consequences of sin, but we never quite see how we can overcome the disadvantages (to ourselves) of obedience.

We are all surely kin to Samuel. *How can I give up cigarettes? How can I give a tenth of my income to the Lord? How can I give up my paramour?*

I know a man who averaged a quart of whiskey every day for thirty years. When, five years ago, he found cirrhosis had left him only six months to live, he gave up drinking altogether. That was prudential obedience but it paid off. Oh! If divine providence would strike us as hard as that!

PRAY for the Dioceses of Minna (Nigeria) and Western Kansas

MOVING FORWARD: *Make a date with Job this weekend. Spend some time with his story and see where you can find your own.*

FRIDAY, August 21

Job 2:10. *But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*

*Ps 140, 142 * 141, 143:1-11(12) | Job 2:1-13 | Acts 9:1-9 | John 6:27-40*

My first silent retreat was at a mountain hermitage. I settled into my home away from home, happily showing reverence to the food, fork, chair, and sunset. I listened to the sounds my mouth made when I chewed and considered the flavors on my tongue and in the air.

I went to bed in happy anticipation and woke my first morning to peace. I had three days ahead of me with no greater priority than to tune in to God's presence. I prepared and ate food and later sat down to meditate and read.

Cold feet led to an idea for a foot washing ceremony. I laid out towels and prepared for the bathroom basin to be a holy vessel. In a private moment of preparation, my heart full of adoration for creation, a bee stung me.

"You need to leave!" I shouted, breaking my silence.

When fear is active, compassion is scarce.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Minnesota,
Western Kowloon (Hong Kong), and Idoani (Nigeria)*

MOVING FORWARD: *When does your brain feel incapable of compassion? How can you combat this?*

SATURDAY, August 22

Job 3:20-21. *Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it does not come, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures.*

*Ps 137:1-6(7-9), 144 * 104 | Job 3:1-26 | Acts 9:10-19a | John 6:41-51*

Something like scales fall from our eyes when we study neuroscience. So much of what can be perceived as choice is impulse. Most people react instead of responding.

More scales fall from our eyes when we study history. Sometimes hardships lead to liberation. Who are we to judge the big picture when our view is so limited? We can each claim only one lifetime of understanding.

When consumed by hardship, I found my way out by the grace of God and with the aid of a gratitude practice. Every day for months, I wrote ten reasons I was grateful. The discipline was more difficult on some days than others—but grew easier with practice. Over time, I came to see gratitude as a lifeline.

*God, please whisper something sweet to the bitter in soul.
Grant us peace that passes understanding.*

**PRAY for the Dioceses of Mishamikoweesh (Canada)
Western Louisiana, and Ife and Ife East (both in Nigeria)**

MOVING FORWARD: *Share a sweet word of encouragement with a family member or work associate who may be struggling.*

SUNDAY, August 23

12 Pentecost

Matthew 16:20. *Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.*

*Ps 124 or Ps 138 | Exodus 1:8—2:10 or Isaiah 51:1-6
Romans 12:1-8 | Matthew 16:13-20*

I have a nagging suspicion today's church isn't what Jesus had in mind.

I can't imagine he'd want everything to be about him. He did not bask in stardom. He practiced service. Forgiveness. Honesty. Gratitude. Healing. Love. Jesus did the hard, boots-on-the-ground footwork and deferred to his Father's will. He gave his Father the glory.

Jesus did not work in a building. He did not stick to his neighborhood. People came to him with nothing and found a place to belong. He consorted with outcasts and foreigners. He washed the feet of those who worshiped him.

When he learned, he allowed his mind to change and illuminated how little we allow ourselves to see. Love led him to bear the sins of all people, everywhere, for all time.

PRAY for the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East

MOVING FORWARD: *WWJD: What would Jesus do in our churches today?*

MONDAY, August 24

Saint Bartholomew

Luke 22:24. *A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest.*

Ps 91 or 91:1-4 | Deuteronomy 18:15-18 | 1 Corinthians 4:9-15 | Luke 22:24-30

Sit in a room with children and correct one child. See how quickly others speak up to assure you they were in the right. What fears override a child's ability to show compassion? What opportunity might they miss if they remain silent? What do these children seek in their proclamations?

I want to be great. I thought I knew how to make that happen. I thought I needed an expensive education. I thought I needed a job that paid well. I thought I needed to know all the right words to pray to God.

As it turns out, I need to root out my fears one by one. I need the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. I need to turn my will and my life over to God again and again. Then I can see how great I have always been.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Mississippi,
Western Massachusetts, and Ifo (Nigeria)*

MOVING FORWARD: *What have you thought you needed that you have learned to live without? Share that story today.*

TUESDAY, August 25

Louis

Acts 9:39. *So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them.*

*Ps 5, 6 * 10, 11 | Job 6:1-4, 8-15, 21 | Acts 9:32-43 | John 6:60-71*

My favorite patchwork quilt is made of my Aunt Maureen's clothes. This quilt is cherished not because of the craftsmanship or materials but because I feel close to her—reconnected—when I wrap it around me and snuggle into its warmth.

When a loved one dies, we are left with a body that will decompose. When the spirit leaves the body, we understand it wasn't the body we loved. What we loved is no longer where it was, no longer recognizable. And that's hard to learn to live with.

God, thank you for Aunt Maureen. Please grow my spirit's awareness. Help me connect with her without sight, touch, sound, smell, or taste.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Missouri and Western Mexico

MOVING FORWARD: *Spend extra time today with someone who is grieving a loss.*

WEDNESDAY, August 26

Psalm 12:8. *The wicked prowl on every side, and that which is worthless is highly prized by everyone.*

*Ps 119:1-24 * 12, 13, 14 | Job 6:1; 7:1-21 | Acts 10:1-16 | John 7:1-13*

Many of us live surrounded by stuff. Our shelves are lined with trophies, photos, books, and treasures. They remind us of lessons, accomplishments, and relationships. We call them keepsakes.

My best friend has experienced burglary several times. He doesn't call the experiences burglaries, though. He says he was "given gifts." As more and more of his keepsakes disappeared, he felt more and more free. He experienced less fear. He travels lightly these days, lovingly detached.

I doubt he was burglarized in an attempt to harm him. I imagine the motivations were not centered around my friend at all. The burglars had their own reasons, their own backstory. They felt the prize worth the risk. I believe my friend walked away the winner, though, with an understanding of gifts that can't be shelved or taken.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Mityana (Uganda),
Western Michigan, and Western New York*

MOVING FORWARD: *What is your most prized, non-tangible treasure?*

THURSDAY, August 27

Thomas Gallaudet and Henry Winter Syle

Isaiah 59:1-2. *See, the LORD's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear to dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*

*Ps 18:1-20 * 18:21-50 | Job 8:1-10, 20-22 | Acts 10:17-33 | John 7:14-36*

From the Archives: August 27, 1950

It seems to be humankind's characteristic to seek the causes of our failures outside of ourselves. Adam blamed Eve.

Even in religious practice it is common to charge God with our misfortunes. Why did God do it? Why did God not do it? Ancient nations would charge their gods with weakness when the desired response or protection was not forthcoming.

Even Israel spoke thus, and God replied that God's strength was not insufficient to the need. The situation in the nation was not beyond God.

The shortcoming is the people's. Their own sins are what hinder prosperity. Their own transgressions have risen up as partitions so that they cannot see God. It was their reach that was shortened, not God's.

The need is for self-examination and humility before God. If our religion seems to fail us, we must seek the explanation in ourselves and not upbraid God for it.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Mombasa (Kenya),
Western Newfoundland (Canada), and Western North Carolina*

MOVING FORWARD: *What is your favorite method of prayer? Use it with wild abandon today.*

FRIDAY, August 28

Augustine of Hippo

Job 9:33. *There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand on us both.*

*Ps 16, 17 * 22 | Job 9:1-15, 32-35 | Acts 10:34-48 | John 7:37-52*

Job's understanding of what was happening in his life was painfully limited. I imagine Job's spirit groaned through many, many prayers.

When we fall on difficult times, it can be a comfort to believe there is someone with the power to exact justice—an umpire to make life play by the rules. When our ego insists our loved and trusted God is acting unjustly, we look for someone to help plead our case. We ask for prayers like they are testaments to value.

When we give God a to-do list, we communicate mistrust in God's will. Who are we, as players with skin in the game, to decide what's fair? God, let our trust in your loving kindness be our umpire.

In the wordless groans of the Holy Spirit, I pray!

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Monmouth (Wales),
Western Tanganyika (Tanzania), and Igbomina (Nigeria)*

MOVING FORWARD: *What have you committed to wordless prayer? Is there something you can release to God in this way?*

SATURDAY, August 29

The Beheading of John the Baptist

Psalm 21:11. *You will destroy their offspring from the land, and their descendants from among the peoples of the earth.*

*Ps 20, 21:1-7(8-14) * 110:1-5(6-7), 116, 177
Job 9:1; 10:1-9, 16-22 | Acts 11:1-18 | John 8:12-20*

We are such hypocrites. The wrath of God sounds terrible until we have an enemy in our crosshairs. *God, I confess my sins to you. Please show me grace. See my enemies? Please kick them in the face.*

Jesus says let your light shine before others. Jesus says be reconciled. Jesus says turn the other cheek. Give what's asked of you. Go the extra mile. Love your enemies. Pray for your persecutors.

No one ever said following Jesus would be easy.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Montana, Wiawso (Ghana),
and Igbomina-West (Nigeria)*

MOVING FORWARD: *Make this your prayer today: God, please keep my prayers simple. Grant me knowledge of your will for me and the power to carry it out.*

Romans 12:21. *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Ps 105:1-6,23-26,45c or Ps 26:1-8 | Exodus 3:1-15 or Jeremiah 15:15-21

Romans 12:9-21 | Matthew 16:21-28

How do we overcome evil with good? First, we have to understand that simple understandings of good and evil don't hold up well in the real world. We catch "good guys" in "bad" acts and "bad guys" in "good" ones. Once we understand this complexity, the label of "evil" becomes much harder to dole out.

The most helpful definition I've heard for evil is the "absence of God." Before this understanding, I sought rationalizations for people's behaviors. I tried to overcome evil with logic. Now I see that the way to overcome evil is obvious: I need only announce God's presence.

God, empty me of that which does not serve you. I am a vessel for your love. Pour me out for your people.

*PRAY for the Dioceses of Montreal, Willochra (Australia),
and Ijebu and Ijebu-North (both in Nigeria)*

MOVING FORWARD: *How will you announce God's presence in your next difficult moment?*

Psalm 9:1. *I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all your marvelous works.*

*Ps 25 * 9, 15 | Job 12:1-6,13-25 | Acts 11:19-30 | John 8:21-32*

I have been reading *Forward Day by Day* since I was in high school, as has my mother. Reflections from these pages have shown up for me in big ways on crucial days. I often marvel at the synchronicity this publication supports in my life and in so many others. The words of authors who wrote before me touched me in ways they could not have designed, as will, I'm sure, the words of authors who follow.

I write nearly a year before you read this. My words are inspired by ripples in the pond of my life. They meet you where you are and move you as God wills. I do not know your final destination, nor do I know mine. I have given you what I know today, and while it is not much, it is everything.

Thank you, God, for a safe space to tell your marvelous works. Thank you for changing ears and eyes and hearts. Thank you for growing understanding and infinite humility. Thank you for simple prayers. Please fill me with grace. Amen.

PRAY for the Dioceses of Moosonee (Canada) and Winchester (England)

MOVING FORWARD: *Who will you invite to join you in reading Forward Day by Day next month?*