

Lent 2017 – The Journey to Easter

Daily Inspiration for Lent

by the Rev. Stephen Rozelle

Easter might be considered the epitome of Joy! The theme of our Lenten exercise this year is “Taking on Being Joyful.” We don’t have to wait until Easter to experience this joy. God’s voice was spoken to Jesus at his Baptism: “You are my beloved.” It created the context for Jesus’ ministry. It is the same voice and the same message to which you and I are invited to “own.” Live out of the context “Beloved child of God.” Claim it! We’re either owned by God or we’re owned by our past. I am owned by God. I am a beloved child of God.

These thoughts/exercises/practices are best done in a group setting. Transformation occurs in the context of community. Share the experience to benefit others. Share what works and what doesn’t work. I will make myself available as well. smrozzelle@hotmail.com.

Ash Wednesday, March 1: I am a beloved child of God, with blemishes in my past. We have trial, error, guilt. How about trial, error, *growth*?

Thursday, March 2: Get rid of fault and blame. Replace “What’s wrong?” with “What’s next?”

Friday, March 3: Memorize Luke 9:62. Jesus said “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” The kingdom of Heaven is always presented as something within or in front of us, “at hand.” Hell comes from holding on to our past.

Saturday, March 4: Embrace “What is” rather than “it shouldn’t be this way.” There is a choice about this. My daughter has embraced her daughter’s Cystic Fibrosis. She is freed and enjoying being a mother.

Sunday, March 5: “I’m blessed” or “not enough”? The evidence will support the game I am playing. I’m blessed is a lot more fun!

Monday, March 6: Righteousness: being honest in every area of my life. Notice where you rationalize... They are really "rational lies," often accompanied by the voice that says "no one will know."

Tuesday, March 7: Commit to humility, which is not to compare. This is the best definition for humility I have ever encountered. My access to humility, believe it or not, is my anger. Underneath the anger is something like, "I wouldn't drive like that, you idiot. I'm better than that!"

Wednesday, March 8: At any given time there is one of two inner voices speaking to me. One is the voice of the devil. The other is the voice of God. Learn to distinguish which voice is speaking. When I was called to be a priest there were two distinct voices. One voice beckoned me to be a priest in God's Church. The other voice was always reminding me "Are you kidding? If people only knew that you stole \$20 from your father, meant for the church collection, they would laugh you out of the room. Are you kidding? No way!!"

Thursday, March 9: Recreate your relationship with God based on *trust*, not on what you believe. Trust is a surrender to God's world. Belief puts God in my world.

Friday, March 10: My life is a gift from God. Never refuse a gift because it deprives the giver of the joy of giving.

Saturday, March 11: The birth and death of Jesus is preceded by chaos. "How can this be," Joseph asked. The mob screamed "Crucify him, crucify him!" The temptation is to manage the chaos. God is borne in the midst of chaos! Embrace the chaos in life.

Sunday, March 12: The second coming of Christ has no "juice" when it is "someday, one day." The second coming of Christ occurs every time I'm thoughtful, generous or compassionate. I will be the second coming of Christ today.

Monday, March 13: Starting today I will take on being joyful. Easter is the epitome of joy. My circumstances have nothing to do with being joyful. Jesus reminded me that I am the light in God's world. As such, I am the possibility of joy. Bad things happen so that the light can shine through.

Tuesday, March 14: I am responsible for joy in my life. We use the word responsible like fault, blame, guilt. "Are you responsible for this?" No – I am able to respond (responsible) by being filled with joy by God's grace, not saturated with guilt leftover from yesterday.

Wednesday, March 15: "God damn you..." is automatic. "God bless you!" is intentional. Automatic serves me. Intentional serves you. Be intentional.

Thursday, March 16: People say, "I can forgive, but I can't forget." So don't forget! But still choose to forgive. The forgiveness supersedes the infraction. This is freedom.

Friday, March 17: The people who annoy me the most are the very ones who help to build my character. Thank God for those people!

Saturday, March 18: Grace: God says, I'm crazy in love with you and always will be! Trust me.

Sunday, March 19: The quality of my relationship is a function of the words I use. Today I will upgrade one of my relationships by upgrading the words that come out of my mouth. "Jerk" only exists in language. So does "wonderful."

Monday, March 20: "I have come to bring you life in all its abundance." (John 10:10) Abundance is the product of gratitude. I will look for gratitude in anything that happens to me today, i.e. "Oh, I got fined for speeding." "Yes and I am so blessed to have a car."

Tuesday, March 21: All people want is to be loved and appreciated. Today I will be doing the appreciating.

Wednesday, March 22: I wrote my 35 year old daughter a letter 12 years ago telling her how much I love her. She still has it. The beauty of a love letter is that it recreates the love every time it is read. Hand write your children a letter to express everything you love about them. Mail it. If you don't have children, write to a significant other.

Thursday, March 23: Replace all complaints with requests. Complaints hold onto the past in a way that leads to arguments. "You didn't take out the trash!" (Cannot be undone.) Rather: "Please take out the trash on trash day." My access to freedom, joy and happiness is to disappear my complaints.

Friday, March 24: My opinions only matter when I vote. And we lose friendships over them. I will be careful about voicing my opinions today. My opinion and yours... simply another point of view.

Saturday, March 25: The Beatitudes: Blessed are those who mourn, they will be comforted. Another way of saying this: Oh the joy of having an upset. It will bring you closer to God.

Sunday, March 26: When I hold onto a resentment I make myself a victim of that person. i.e. my well-being is determined by the action of someone else. I will not be a victim of anyone or anything. I will remember that the kingdom of Heaven is in front of me not behind.

Monday, March 27: Meister Eckhart: If the only prayer you say in your entire life is "thank you" that would suffice.

Tuesday, March 28: It's not "the problem" that keeps me from being joyful, it's the thought "I shouldn't have this problem."

Wednesday, March 29: I will experience loss, grief and sadness. Give it room. Give yourself permission to grieve. Then let it be a "blip" on the radar screen. Sadness is a rich emotion. Give it your all. Then have it be the source from which I can comfort others during their sadness.

Thursday, March 30: Remember today, in the midst of a grumble, "Oh, sorry, I promised you, God, that I would take on being joyful. I am filled with joy. Thank you!

Friday, March 31: I will be generous with my mouth today. Find someone over 80 and tell them "You're absolutely adorable!"

Saturday, April 1: Slip a few bucks in someone's pocket without them knowing and notice how the blessing returns to you. Karma: what goes around comes around – that includes blessings.

Sunday, April 2: Anger is 'reactional.' It is human nature. Jesus invites us to be intentional – listen for that which brings life to me.

Monday, April 3: Scrutinize the label in the food you buy. No more than 300 mg. of sodium in any one food item.

Tuesday, April 4: I will do five acts of kindness today, anonymously.

Wednesday, April 5: Notice the people on the road who are courteous and do the speed limit. We only notice the “crazy” drivers.

Thursday, April 6: Wear something that represents joy in your life.

Friday, April 7: Donate something to the local food pantry.

Saturday, April 8: Let God decide who is saved. That’s not our job. (Do not judge.)

Sunday, April 9: Passion is sometimes interpreted as suffering. Passion is sometimes interpreted as commitment. Be present to Jesus’ commitment today – not just his suffering.

Monday, April 10: People “occur” a certain way. Jesus “occurred” for a blind man as a healer and miracle worker. Jesus “occurred” for a religious authority as blasphemous. Be responsible for the “occurring.” It’s about me not about them.

Tuesday, April 11: “Understanding” makes no difference – it’s a consolation prize, at best. Instead, we are invited to *be* the Spirit of Jesus in the world. I will take on the mindset of Jesus everywhere I go today.

Wednesday, April 12: I will be at peace with everyone I encounter today. I will look for what we have in common.

Thursday, April 13: Jesus said, “I come to serve, not to be served.” Create the dignity of four people today.

Good Friday, April 14: The soldiers mocked, the crowd scoffed, Peter denied. Jesus forgave. “What’s in it for me?” or, “How can I contribute to you?” Notice how I live.

Saturday, April 15: Notice where I suffer – it’s driven by the past. Who I am *as possibility* – that is my commitment waiting to happen, living into the future.

Easter Sunday, April 16: I will reinvent myself as the Possibility of Joy each and every day. I will own – not earn – “You are my beloved.”