

..... **Daily Devotions**

Devotions – March 14-20, 2021

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Sunday, March 14, 2021

Text: Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV)

but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.

Devotions for this week in the midst of the Lenten season will reflect on the gift of God's splendor in the natural world and our lives. Today let us look skyward and marvel at God's birds.

In many regions of our country, eagles are a rare sight. We are blessed in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Northern Wisconsin with a relative abundance of this majestic bird. There was a time, however, when eagles were not abundant and rarely seen. Their numbers had significantly decreased due to extensive use of DDT and other harmful pesticides and herbicides. Thankfully, wisdom prevailed and the use of the harmful chemicals was curtailed, which allowed a renewal of the eagle population in many areas of our vast country.

God gives us strength and renews us through his Holy Spirit. Another bird, the graceful and peaceful dove commonly symbolizes the Holy Spirit. With the strong and majestic eagle, the graceful and calming dove, and all the other birds in the sky, we are rich in God's splendor.

Let us Pray: *Lord, we thank you for soaring birds in the sky and for your Holy Spirit and renewing grace. Help us open our eyes, hearts, and minds to both enjoy your splendor and accept your renewing grace into our lives.*



Monday, March 15, 2021

Text: Psalm 96:12 (NRSV)

let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Trees. Sometimes when I walk in the woods and take time to appreciate the wonder of God's trees, Joyce Kilmer's poem titled "Trees" comes to mind. The poem below sings about the joy of trees and is found in the public domain.

I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who ultimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Yes, only God can make a tree, and what wonderful things are trees. During the process of photosynthesis, trees use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide from the air into water and sugars that they need to thrive. During this conversion process, life-sustaining oxygen needed by all animals, including humans, is released back into the atmosphere. Trees provide beautiful vistas for our enjoyment, especially in the fall when the leaves turn color. Trees provide a home for many of God's smaller creatures. And, trees provide wood for our building and heating needs. Most importantly, a tree provided the wood for the cross of our redemption. And, as we often lift our arms to God as we pray, the branches of a tree are always lifted towards the heavens.

Let us Pray: *We sing for joy and thank you, Lord, for the gift of trees. We marvel at your wisdom to create trees that do so much for us and for the rest of your natural kingdom. Most of all, we thank Jesus for the sacrifice of dying on a cross made from a tree so that we may be saved.*



Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Text: Job 5:9-10 (NRSV)

He does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. He gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields.

Rain. The splendor of God's rain is a replenishing gift. And, like all of God's gifts, it is freely given to everyone, both the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). If we take a moment to ponder the mechanics of rain, how can we not marvel at God's splendor? As dry air passes over bodies of water, moisture from the waterbody is evaporated into the air. During the process of evaporation, many impurities are left behind. The evaporated water starts to condense in the atmosphere around microscopic particles of dust, and when atmospheric conditions are suitable, water falls back to the earth as rain. This water cycle is God's process of transporting life-sustaining moisture. When the spring rains begin, take a moment to reflect on the goodness of life and contemplate how marvelous is our God!

Let us Pray: *Lord, we are grateful for your wonderful gift of life-sustaining water and rain that replenishes all the land. We pray that as rain replenishes the earth, in like manner your Holy Spirit helps replenish our faith as we recall the waters of our baptism.*



Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Text: James 1:6

But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;

The sea. While at times the seas can be harsh and formidable where shipwrecks and drownings are not uncommon, the seas are also a source of great joy and sustenance in our lives. We enjoy the scenery and recreation opportunities provided by the water. Diatoms in the oceans are essential for all life on earth and the waters are teeming with seafood that we harvest for our nourishment.

I fondly remember the times as a child my parents took my sisters and me to the Atlantic Ocean seashore. As young children, we marveled at the sights, had fun playing in the sand, and took great joy in running in and out of the water as the waves broke onto the shore. As we got older, we got more daring and ventured out to deeper water and bobbed around in the wave swells. And, finally we got the courage to ride the waves back into shore over and over again. This was great fun until one day, I didn't time the wave correctly and it broke over me, driving me to the bottom, rolling me over and over, and scraping my body along the broken shell pieces. It was no longer fun that day! That experience as a child made me doubt the wisdom or fun of riding waves and made me a bit scared to try it again. Eventually I conquered my fear and did go back to ride the waves again.

Faith in God can be synonymous with being tossed about by the waves of the ocean. Time and time again things happen in life that can make us doubt our faith. Just like the child who eventually went back into the water, we should again look to God and have faith that all will be right according to his plan.

Let us Pray: *Lord, we thank you for seas that provide us with much joy and life-giving food. We pray that like the young boy who conquered his fear of being tossed about in the waves, that when we experience bad times, we conquer our doubts and keep our faith in your loving grace.*



Thursday, March 18, 2021

Text: Isaiah 55:12: (NRSV)

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song

Mountains. Hiking is a favorite pastime for many of us, including my wife and me. Even though the mountains found in the region of the NGLS are really just big hills, hiking to the top does give us wonderful vistas to gaze upon. Have you ever followed a trail up a big hill or a mountain, and once you reached the top gave thanks to God for the beauty you see? To me, it is impossible not to marvel at God's beautiful creation when viewing the immense amount of forest lands and open waters from the top of both Bareback Ridge and Hogback Mountain located north of Marquette. After huffing and puffing my way up to the top of either hill, it is great to stop, catch my breath, and marvel at the beauty I see. The peacefulness at the mountain top away from the hustle and bustle of life provides a wonderful opportunity to communicate with God.

Let us Pray: *Lord, we pray that we are able to fully appreciate all of the wondrous nature you created. Help us be good stewards of your creation so that those that come after us will also have a chance to enjoy the wonder and beauty you have provided.*



Friday, March 19, 2021

Text: 1 Peter 1:24-25 (NIV)

For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.”

Flowers. One of the great joys of spring is seeing the reawakening of God’s flowering splendor. Don’t you enjoy watching new flower shoots as they struggle to break through the earth, grow into nice long, strong stems, and eventually send out buds that open up into beautiful flowers? Have you ever come across a whole field of wildflowers in full bloom? Isn’t a beautiful sight? Think about the struggle those flowers had to go through to be there. Their seeds had to not only avoid getting eaten by birds and small animals in the fall, but also had to survive the winter harshness in shallow soil. Then in the spring with renewed strength the seeds had to break open sending roots into the ground and a stem skyward to grow into a beautiful flower.

We are like those flowers. We are like a seed waiting to bloom with God’s love; all we have to do is reach out for that love. Once we accept that God loves us unconditionally, we will blossom like the flowers in the field.

Let us Pray: *In our mortality, Lord, we struggle to stay steadfast with you. Help us to withstand the temptations of our existence so that we may flourish and be like a field of wildflowers and in full bloom with your love.*



Saturday, March 20, 2021

Text: Matthew 5:44-45 (NRSV)

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good.

The Sun. What a marvelous thing is the sun! It provides our world with heat and energy. The sun gives us pleasure as we gaze upon beautiful sunrises and sunsets. We embrace those days when the sun shines in a cloudless sky. Conversely, we are unhappy when there are multiple days in a row when the sun is hidden behind clouds, rain, or snow. Do you take the sun for granted or have you ever considered that without the sun, there would be no physical life?

Consider this; just as God created the sun in the sky to meet our physical needs of warmth and energy, he also sent the Son, Jesus to provide for our spiritual life. Both the sun and the Son shine on all of us. Do we take either or both for granted?

Let us Pray: *O God, thank you for the sun to nourish our physical needs and thank you for the Son, who sacrificed himself for our spiritual life. We want to walk with you. Please lead us along the pathway of light to your everlasting love.*

