

## April 20<sup>th</sup> – Holy Wednesday

### Centering Breath Prayer: Holy Father...fix my eyes on Jesus.

#### Opening Prayer:

*Author and perfecter of my faith, stay before me today as I seek your face as my guide. The pathway becomes harder as we approach your crucifixion on Friday. Keep me focused on you and your desires for my life so that I do not lose my way. Teach me the joy of doing your will so that I will not turn away when things don't go the way I think they should. Sustain me when I grow weary and lose heart because of the opposition from others. In your saving and sustaining name, I pray. Amen.*

#### Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

**Key Verses: Hebrews 12:1-3: (1) “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (2) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) Consider him who endures such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (NIV).**

How often do you and I grow weary and lose heart because of opposition from sinful humankind? We are surrounded every day by the consequences of sin and the hold sin has on each of us. It would be very easy to quit trying to change anything for the good. It would be so easy to give up and say, “Woe is me!” Our scripture passage today follows immediately after a long list of people who faced dire consequences because of their faith. But, the author of Hebrews entreats us to *throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.*” He goes on to encourage us to “Keep on keeping on” in words from our day. But, the author does not indicate that we should do this on our own, but to *“fix our eyes upon Jesus.”* Becoming like Jesus is our goal, that for which we strive. In the middle of Holy Week, we are surrounded by examples of the sin and death that dominates life. But, Jesus endured it all in order to bring us victory over sin and death. Jesus not only endured, he willingly and even joyfully gave up his life for that victory. Does that mean that Jesus did not suffer his death in the same agony as any other victim of the savage execution by crucifixion? Does that mean he was not assailed by doubts or fears? Does that mean he did not desire to change the plan, as any human would? All anyone needs is to look at the account of Jesus’ prayer in the garden at Gethsemane to know this is not true! Yet, when it was time to fulfill God’s plan, Jesus calmly and compassionately endured a shameful, agonizing death willingly for you and me. He calmly confronted his arrest, taking the sword out of his follower’s hand, and equally faced his accusers at his highly illegal trials with calm and dignity; he had compassion on another man suffering beside him, and forgave those who were killing him. These are actions of love and victory over the sin and death which surrounded Jesus.

If we are to become like Jesus, we too, need to exhibit compassion in our everyday encounters, no matter how much sin and death is evident within them. This is, of course, much easier said than done! What we can do is daily ask for God's assistance to transform us into the image of Christ and to daily attempt to follow Jesus to the best of our abilities. We must continually strive to learn more about the way Jesus faced life and to do likewise. This is what, I believe, our author meant by fixing *"our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."* Many people use the phrase, *"What would Jesus do?"* to fix their eyes on Jesus. Others pray for guidance each day. *No matter how we go about our quest to become like Jesus, it is imperative that we maintain the quest. Lent is all about what Jesus did for us and how we respond to his actions. Holy Week is the height of Lent and we see the most intense time Jesus lived, how he faced death and why, and will culminate in complete victory. We, too, can live, face death and have complete victory in Jesus, not on our own, but through the victory of Jesus. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it!*

**Additional Scriptures: Matthew 26:36-39; Luke 22:49-50; John 18:12-14, 19-24; Luke 23:32-43**

**Questions for reflection and/or journaling:**

1. What kind of response do I make in the face of earthly opposition to my faith?
2. What are some of the ways I "fix my eyes upon Jesus?"
3. What is my understanding of the sacrifice that Jesus made on my behalf?

**Suggestions for action:**

1. Phrase for you path: **FIX YOUR EYES UPON JESUS.**
2. Decide how you prefer to "fix your eyes upon Jesus."
3. If there is something unpleasant that you must do, ask the Lord to help you with his presence and wisdom.
4. As you reread the scriptures of Christ's sacrifice, look at all the ways he was forgiving and compassionate. Use these as examples of your own behavior.

**Closing Prayer:**

*Dearest Lord Jesus, as we progress through this Holy Week, help me to see the strength of your resolve to see God's plan to redeem us to completion. Your sacrifice was awesome and hard for me to understand, yet my love for you becomes greater with each telling of your story. I cannot fully comprehend how you could face such a horrendous death for me. Help me to live in a manner that is consistent with your love and compassion for me. Help me to become like you, for I cannot do it on my own. In your awesome name, I pray. Amen.*