

A large, leafless tree silhouette stands prominently in the center of the frame. The sun is positioned directly behind the tree's trunk, creating a bright, glowing effect. The sky is a soft, hazy orange and yellow, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The bottom of the image shows a calm body of water reflecting the light from the sky and the tree.

Passion

Reflect on the word Passion. Take a few moments to think, to hope and to pray about how God might create passion in your life. How might your reflection shape you, change you and join you and Christ together? After you have taken a few minutes to reflect here, turn the page and read further.

The Twenty-eighth Day of Lent

Monday, March 22, 2010

Invocation

*Holy God, speak love into our lives.
Let your presence be life giving,
offering a sense of purpose, meaning, and hope to us.
Draw passion out of us, stirring our Spirits,
spurring us onward.
Remind us that we are your children,
that we belong to you.
Let your relentless love for us,
create within us passion,
joining us to you and to take this love to others.
Amen.*

Reflection

Passion seems to be a scarce commodity these days. It seems that when we see it, though, we know it right away. Perhaps it is in an artist's work, the focused words of an author, or the physical drive of an athlete. Either way, passion stands out and demands to be noticed.

When one is passionate about something, they don't worry about how they will be perceived by others. They do not seem preoccupied with their dignity when their passion is motivating them. The passion within each of us drives us toward our goals, spurring us onward, further up and further in. It was the passion in Christ that helped him remain obedient to the Father, to embody love, and to embrace sacrifice on our behalf.

Passion changes the world. Passion inspires rally cries. Passion makes people want to believe in something bigger than themselves. God calls us to passion - what are you passionate about?

Benediction

May you be enriched by your observance of Lent,
and may God fill your heart and mind with
wisdom, love and understanding. Amen.

Your reflections...

The Thirtieth Day of Lent

Tuesday, March 22, 2010

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart."
- Deuteronomy 6:4-6*

When God gives the commandments to the people of Israel, they weren't burdensome laws to be borne. They were a blessing. He gave a group of restless pilgrims a home, a name, and an identity. God blessed the Hebrew people by adopting them as His own, His children. With identity comes understanding of God's nature. He lovingly calls all of us His children. As a child of God, are you encouraged to dream? Do your dreams open new doors of opportunity? Take some time to write about that.

Your reflections. . .

The Thirtieth-first Day of Lent

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.'
– John 19:1-6

Are there times when you are afraid of what others might think of you? Have there been times that you felt strongly about something, but even your closest friends might not understand. At his trial, Jesus finds himself alone. His disciples have scattered and are in hiding for fear that they too might be arrested. Jesus is publically humiliated, but he is so committed to staying the course, to seeing things through, that he offers no resistance, and lets his love for humanity, for his friends, and for his Father guide him in his final hours.

There are times when the things we are passionate about might isolate us from others. Passion, at times, can also be the sole source of our strength. Reflect on what things give you strength in difficult times.

Your reflections. . .

The Thirty-second Day of Lent

Thursday, March 25, 2010

*"Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.*

*Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all."*

– Isaiah 53:1-6

"By His wounds, we are healed." This is a great summation of the atoning nature of Christ. These passages from the Old Testament reveal that God is passionately working out the redemption of humanity from the beginning. What does this say about our God? What kind of love is this, that God is pressing onward with grace and love, understanding that Christ would be wounded, so that we would be made whole?

With passion comes vision. What are your passions? In the midst of adversity, do you feel strong enough to press on? Do you feel that these passions have longevity? What would help you to see them through? Passion has an ability to steady us, giving us sight of an end goal. What are some of those for you?

Your reflections. . .

The Thirty-third Day of Lent

Friday, March 26, 2010

*"If I say, 'I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name',
then within me there is something like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.' "*

- Jeremiah 20:9

Have you ever been asked to keep a secret and it felt like it was eating you alive from the inside out? Jeremiah, in this verse is talking about not being able to hold in God's words to the people of Israel. When he holds in God's words, it burns on the inside, and he cannot hold it in any longer. There are all kinds of things that we hold within that need to be released. We hold grudges, we hold secrets, and we even hold our tongues when we should probably say something.

If you are holding some things in, things that need to be released, write them down here. Pray that God will give you relief as you release these burdens, thoughts, or grudges. Passion doesn't require tension, so let this be a release for you.

Your reflections. . .

The Thirty-fourth Day of Lent

Saturday, March 27, 2010

"'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'"

- John 12:27-28

Staying the course in the midst of adversity is difficult. Not losing faith in the cause when everything seems to be falling apart around us is equally disheartening. Several times, Jesus told his disciples that he would be handed over to the authorities and be killed. One time, Peter got so mad at Jesus that he rebuked him for saying these things.

In this passage, Jesus isn't fearful. It is clear that Jesus doesn't desire to go to the cross, but he understands his purpose. It has been his path all along, from the beginning. He came to serve, and he understands that everything else would lead to that moment on the cross.

If you were to draw a map of your spiritual path or journey, what would it look like, from the beginning? Draw it out here if you like. Start on the left and draw a line, letting it rise and lower according to different times in your life. Trying to remember your spiritual journey may take a while, so allow yourself some time to think before mapping this out.

Your reflections. . .

The Sixth Sunday in Lent

March 28, 2010

Celebrating the Spiritual Disciplines: *Worship*

Simply put, worship is the engagement of a person's entire being with the greatness of who God is. Worship is our life speaking to God, and God speaking back to us. Worship requires us to become attuned to our senses. We listen, look, taste, feel, and smell. Worship is an experiential thing. We breathe in the presence of God wherever we are. We inhale the memories of His faithful acts in the past. Just as we suffocate for lack of air, without worship, we suffer a spiritual suffocation for lack of attentiveness to God's presence and faithfulness.

"Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father."

– Richard Foster

*This Lenten Season
Create in me. . . Harmony
Create in me. . . Purpose
Create in me. . . Forgiveness
Create in me. . . Courage
Create in me. . . Humility
Create in me. . . Passion
And now bring me to Wonder
That I may seek God's will
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*