



## *Journey Week One*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.*

Romans 12:1-3a

Remembering  
**Day 1—Ash Wednesday**

Sacrifice  
**Day 2**

Worship  
**Day 3**

Vision  
**Day 4**

Discernment  
**Day 5**

Freedom  
**Day 6**

## Remembering

### Day 1—Ash Wednesday

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . .*

Romans 12:1a

The morning comes, dearest Jesus, and I hunger again to taste your blessing. May the grace of all eternity flow through my soul, a river of peace, cooling my fevered life and the lives of all I touch this day.

May it be so, and so that it may be, I remember your mercies—one that changed everything.

I remember driving to Dubuque, Iowa, and parking in front of Martin Luther's statue at Wartburg Seminary. Sitting silently, gazing at the bell tower rising over the beckoning doorway of the school, I hungered to enter. But my hopes drowned in the awareness that it was impossible. I knew I would never walk through those doors.

A college drop-out, I made cheese, sold cars, and worked in a drapery factory. The longer I worked at each, the more I ached for another life, a life wrapped in the gospel of a love for which I had no words. Still don't.

Your love burned for me and in me, Holy Mystery. And I yearned for more, to know more, to feel more, to touch the flame of the love whose source is beyond human imagining.

Through the restless burning of my soul, you moved me beyond my fears to throw myself into the arms of the hope you ignited in me. Loving Mystery, you were—and are—that hope that burns in us, moving us to reach beyond the fears that hold us back from more deeply knowing and serving you.

Relentlessly, you stirred my restlessness, my discomfort, and I forgot how much work it would be, how much money it would cost, and how impossible it all seemed as Dixie and I planned for our first child.

And I walked through the doors beneath the tower into a new world, a world of study and service, of learning to love as you love. This is your mercy to me. You refused to leave me to my fears so that I might enter the hope you had in me.

The day begins, and I remember your mercies, just one that coaxed me into the warmth of your eternal embrace.

*Biblical Wisdom*

*In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying . . . “Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

1 Corinthians 11:25

*Theological Thoughts*

Each person meets God in his or her own experience, whether that experience occurs with a community at a liturgical or paraliturgical service, or with one or two others, or alone.<sup>5</sup>

*Silence for Meditation*

*Questions to Ponder*

- What memories of blessings did today’s reflection call to mind for you?
- When you have been helpless and hopeless, how has God broken through to bring you to a new day?
- Where or in whom do you experience the “mercies of God”?

*Psalm Fragment*

*I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;*

*I will remember your wonders . . .*

Psalm 77:11

*Journal Reflections*

- Mentally walk through a recent day, noting the mercies that come to mind. Write about the impact these have on you.
- Christian life is *eucharistic* (from the Greek word for “gratitude”). In other words, we remember and give thanks for the giving of God. What is the connection between the Eucharist or Holy Communion and your daily blessings?
- What is God’s hope for and in you?

*Prayer for Today*

Open my eyes to your mercies that I may see and, in seeing, enter your joy.  
Amen.

## Sacrifice

### Day 2—Thursday

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. . .*

Romans 12:1

I wake again into a world where you are, Loving Presence. Lighting three small candles, I kneel and mumble my prayer. My words strain to touch what I feel and most need.

May my posture be better prayer than words, a silent crying hunger to know you, loving and near. In kneeling, I give myself to you. Do what you will with this life. It's yours.

And then I remember Dimce. The front curl of his wavy brown hair danced as he drew a mass of intersecting lines on a succession of paper napkins. We sat in a café in Skopje, Macedonia, on a sunny April day.

Dimce was the business manager of an agency that dug wells in poor villages in his country. But this day he was diagramming how he managed a river of food and supplies from ports in Greece and Albania, through Balkan mountain passes, to refugee camps in Macedonia.

Eighty thousand lives depended on the incomprehensible scribble on the back of a napkin. And Dimce never looked up. He extended his diagram from one rumpled napkin to the next, explaining all the while, but he never looked at me. He was totally surrendered to a life-giving task that had become a holy obsession. Holy, indeed, for preserving and nurturing life is God's work.

I think of him, my Lord, and so many others who taught me without having any idea that I would remember them years later. Dimce did not give you part

of himself. He did not surrender some small pleasure to discipline himself or to identify with your sacrificial love, as we do in Lent.

He willingly gave himself to your life-giving labor of love for the world. A deep desire within his soul moved him—not some external compulsion or law.

Tell me, from what life-giving spring does this desire flow, fresh and free?

Ah, it is you, loving God. It is always you. Give me that desire. Awaken me each day to your mercies that I may be as surrendered to your life-giving ways as was Dimce. Would to God that I should glow with such beauty.

*Biblical Wisdom*

*Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Ephesians 5:2

*Theological Thoughts*

The church of Christ is a fellowship of givenness, a communion of holy surrender to an inscrutable love that continuously gives itself to the ungrateful and undeserving—that is, to us. Only the beauty of surrendered lives will make a cynical world take notice. If the church fails to nurture such beauty, the world is right to ignore us.<sup>6</sup>

*Silence for Meditation*

*Questions to Ponder*

- What do you do each morning or day to put yourself before God, centering your life and attention?
- When do you lose yourself in your work, losing track of time? What is that like?
- When and how have you experienced the joy of sacrifice?

*Psalm Fragment*

*Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and pay your vows to the Most High.*

Psalm 50:14