

# A Window on Lent Devotional Activity

## Lent 5

Week of 21 March 2021



Jesus [said], "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor." (John 12:23-26)

The gospel readings throughout this this season of Lent have been pointing us to the message of the cross, reminding us that it is not easy to follow Christ. This week, as we draw ever closer to Holy Week, Jesus' words are a stark reminder of the paradox of our faith: that in order for new life to emerge, something must die. To have life, one must lose it, for it is in the dying that bears fruit. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit," Jesus says, as he speaks of his own death and resurrection. To follow Christ requires us to let go of that which holds us back from new life.

This week's **Devotional Activity** is an invitation to creatively reflect on the impact of Christ's words on our own spiritual lives. If you have an apple (or pear, or similar seed-bearing fruit) available, you are encouraged to use it as part of your reflection, as described below.



### \*Letting Go

Imagine someone handing you a packet of seeds. If you were to place the packet on a shelf, it would remain a perfectly fine packet of seeds. But, in order for those seeds to grow - in order for them to be fruitful and reach their potential, they must be let go of and be yielded into the ground. In the darkness of the soil, the seeds germinate and break open, and new life emerges. In a similar way, the same is true for us as followers of Christ. In order for new life to emerge in us, we need to let some things die. We need to let go of that which prevents us from allowing Christ's renewing love to fully take root and flourish.

### \* Cut your apple in half, so that the core with its seeds are exposed.

(Normally, we dispose of the seeds and their core, and without second thought they are tossed in a bucket as "dechet.")

\* **Dig out the seeds from your apple and lay them in front of you.** Typically, an apple core contains between 5-8 seeds. How many seeds do you count?

\* **Pick up the seeds, feel them, roll them between your fingers.** Consider how something so small and seemingly insignificant – when yielded to the ground and nurtured – could become something as life-giving as the apple tree that produced the fruit in front of you. When we yield ourselves to God’s creating love, what untapped potential might emerge?

\* **Arrange the seeds into the sign of a cross** – or in a line if there are not enough. Sometimes, the only way we can receive the fullness of what God intends is to let go of something that is holding us back from a more fruitful life in Christ. It could be a certain habit or routine that is standing in the way of a fuller relationship with Christ. Perhaps there is an unresolved issue in one’s life, an old grudge or resentment, a relationship that needs healing or forgiveness, a place of prolonged grief, a burden of brokenness or hurt...  
Let these seeds now represent the things in your life that you need to let go of, in order to draw more closely to Christ.

*In what area/s of my life have I resisted yielding to God’s love? What is it that I need to let go of in order for new life and new growth to emerge?*

\* **Return to your rainbow window.** During our collective prayer time in Sunday’s worship, you were invited to make a new shape on your window out of the rainbow stickers – representing a place for the seeds of God’s love to grow in your heart – such as a pot or bowl. If you did not complete this task on Sunday, you are invited to do so now. Or, you may wish to create a new design out of your rainbow stickers.



*What can I offer up to Christ in this day/week ahead? What one thing can I let go of, in order to make more room for Christ’s love to shape and guide me?*

\* **Consider these words for further reflection:**

Jesus calls us to a different way of living, a way that leads to new life in Christ’s love. In his letter to the Galatians (5:22-25), the apostle Paul describes fruitful discipleship in this way:

*“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.”*

Reflect upon these fruits of the Spirit and upon your own growth in faith.

*Which of these fruits are flourishing in my life and witness? Which are areas of needed growth? In what other ways do I see fruitfulness in my life because of Christ’s love working in me and through me?*

*“Our humanity comes to its fullest bloom in giving [of ourselves]. We become beautiful people when we give whatever we can give: a smile, a handshake, a kiss, an embrace, a word of love, a present, a part of our life... all of our life.”*  
(Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*)

*As a reflection of Christ's love in my life, in what ways can I give of myself to others in the day and week ahead?*

**\* Give Thanks and Enjoy!**

The life in Christ is one of abundance, joy, and gratitude. The apple in front of you is a gift by God for your enjoyment and well-being. You are now invited to eat and enjoy your apple.

Or, include it in a fruit salad as part of your family's mealtime. As you enjoy your apple/s (now or at family mealtime) consider the many (often nameless or overlooked) people who have had a role in making it possible for you to enjoy this apple.

*Offer a prayer of gratitude for... the farmers... farm workers... truck drivers... factory workers... grocers and store employees... the person/s in your family who shop and pay for your food...*

As a family, you may decide to plant seeds of your own. Apple seeds are difficult to grow, so choose any seeds you wish. Or, you may choose to buy a new plant or ivy for your window, which can become a reminder to you of your life of growth in Christ this Lent (and in the days ahead).

**\* Closing Prayer**

*I arise today  
Through God's strength to pilot me;  
God's might to uphold me,  
God's wisdom to guide me,  
God's eye to look before me,  
God's ear to hear me,  
God's word to speak for me,  
God's hand to guard me,  
God's way to lie before me,  
God's shield to protect me,  
God's hosts to save me  
Afar and anear,  
Alone or in a multitude.  
Christ shield me today  
Against wounding*

*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in the eye that sees me,  
Christ in the ear that hears me.*

*(from St. Patrick's Breastplate or Prayer of St. Patrick)*

You may choose to listen to the lovely musical version of this prayer offered by Natalie and Chad Rimmer and Greg Wierzynski during Sunday worship on ELCG's YouTube channel.