

Lent 2024, Week 5 Reflection

BROKEN OPEN TO TRANSFORMATION

Welcome to the Fifth Week of the Lenten audio retreat, presented by Jesuit Connections, a program of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality. Last week, we celebrated Lent's halfway point by seeking to know more fully "A Saving Love" and "A Saving Presence." As we enter into prayer today, imagine there is a light in your heart, growing brighter with every breath. Shine the light from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet. Observe with compassion any tension, distractions, or desires that may want to pull you from the present moment. Simply continue to breathe, and let your light shine ever more brightly as we explore what it means to be "Broken Open to Transformation." This week's reflection was written by Sarah Hardin, an alum of the Contemplative Leaders in Action program in Charlotte, North Carolina...

...

"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life." John 12:24-25

During a pivotal moment in my life in 2019, a close friend gave me a necklace made with a mustard seed sealed inside resin. I treasured the seed necklace as a symbol of my growing faith and trust in God. Yet, the year that followed tested my faith and my view of the world in ways I could never have predicted. On top of it all, my favorite necklace broke. I felt that my faith in God was broken, shattered beyond repair like my necklace. In time, I came to see it was not broken or dead but, rather, broken open.

A grain of wheat must die so that the goodness inside can be exposed and grow into something bigger than itself. Similarly, God's covenant with humanity was transformed only through Jesus dying, being buried, and broken open to become something new.

The dying, broken open seed lets in elements like water and minerals that transform it to become something entirely different that produces much fruit. Out of the slow and quiet darkness of the dirt and decay,

God works through our spirits to create new life. These early moments of transformation can feel like death. Being planted can feel like being buried. It's hard to trust that losing our lives is worth it when all the evidence of new life is still below the surface. Yet, we can trust that God, our Creator and the greatest of all gardeners, will tend the soil and provide us everything we need to grow into who He is creating us to be. Our faith cannot grow if it is kept on display, safe



"Robinia hispida var. fertilis open pod with seeds" by Ninjatacoshell is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.



and sealed in resin. Yes, dying, sacrifice, and trusting are hard! But God's plans for our lives are a thousand times better than the plans we may have.

...

Thank you for listening to this week's reflection, presented by Jesuit Connections, a program of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality. Join us next week for the final, Holy Week installment of our Lenten audio retreat, as we contemplate "Abandonment and Devotion."

Reflection questions:

- *In what ways during this Lenten season am I being broken open and asked to lose my life?*
 - *Are there areas of my life that are metaphorically sealed in resin? Am I keeping something "safe" to prevent it from being transformed by God's grace?*
-



Opening & Closing Prayers

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee by Henry Van Dyke

Joyful, Joyful we adore thee
God of glory, Lord of love
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee
Opening to the sun above
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness
Drive the dark of doubt away
Giver of immortal gladness
Fill us with the light of day.

All thy works with joy surround thee
Earth and heaven reflect thy rays
Stars and angels sing around thee
Center of unbroken praise
Field and forest, vale and mountain
Flowery meadow, flashing sea
Chanting bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in thee.

An Easter Prayer by Michaela Youngson

When everything was dark
and it seemed that the sun would never
shine again,
your love broke through.

Your love was too strong,
too wide,
too deep
for death to hold.

The sparks cast by your love
dance and spread
and burst forth
with resurrection light.

Gracious God,
We praise you for the light of new life
made possible through Jesus.
We praise you for the light of new life
that shone on the first witnesses of
resurrection.
We praise you for the light of new life
that continues to shine in our hearts today.

We pray that the Easter light of life, hope
and joy,
will live in us each day;
and that we will be bearers of that light
into the lives of others.

Amen.