



Week Leading up to 3.21.21: Dying and Bearing Fruit

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Jn 12:20-33

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, help us to understand how to die to self just like the grain of wheat so that we, too, will live to bear great fruit. In Your Holy Name. Amen.

Or

Consider doing an imaginative prayer exercise found on the next page if you didn't use one from the previous week.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. Jesus indicates that He is troubled in the reading today. What do you think/feel is troubling Him? {Verse for leader reference: *"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name."*}

YouTube Video: Should Catholics Fear Death with Jeff Cavins (6:08) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-FG-IJ89pg>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Be honest, do you fear death?
3. What does dying to self mean to you? Does it cause you to think about death differently?
4. Do you think/feel there is a difference between dying at the end of our lives and dying to self daily?
5. Do you have any additional thoughts on the analogy of the grain of wheat dying?
6. Jeff Cavin indicates that death can have great value. Have you ever experienced great value from a death or when practicing dying to self?
7. Do you have any examples of how you could practice dying to self or have done so in the past?

Session Challenges: {Choose one, two or all }

- Practice dying to self. Think of one thing you can do daily to practice dying to self and, as you do it, say the name of Jesus internally.
- Pray the stations this week: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJF9XjG4Wko>
- Watch the movie "The Passion of the Christ" by Mel Gibson or read [Mk 14:1—15:47](#) to ponder and identify with Christ's dying. Pray for an open heart willing to sacrifice and bear fruit through Christ's name.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Dear Jesus, You have shown us the way with the model of your sacrificial life. As Holy Week draws near, may we enter fully into the understanding of Your death and resurrection. Just as the grain of wheat needs to die to bear great fruit, we live in great hope that we may fully embrace Your example of sacrificial love. May we learn to die to self daily so that we may also bear great fruit in Your Name. Amen

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: [Jer 31:31-34](#) Sunday Reading 2: [Heb 5:7-9](#)

Optional Imaginative Prayer – 5th Sunday of Lent Year B

Source: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/arts-faith-lent-fifth-sunday-imaginative-prayer-exercise-2/> - slight modifications made for use in ESG.

To Prepare – Estimate 10-15 minutes. Show the image from the link above before starting. Ask participants to pay attention to what is falling from the hand of the sower and hold the picture in their mind as you begin.

It can be difficult to let go of the golden seeds we have collected with care and saved for planting in anticipation of spring. The ground of our hearts may be covered with snow making it difficult to let them go. It can be difficult to let go of the golden seeds we have due to our fears. We may feel that it is still too cold to let them go. Prayer requires release. And release requires a great courage that allows the body and mind and heart to open and to be still. We begin with attention to each.

First your body: Sit upright, legs crossed or not, feet on the floor or not, lower back pressed against the chair. Open your hands. Let the seeds fall or rest gently in them. Breathe.

Now your mind: As you are able, let these words go through you like seeds go through the cold air, down your spine and into the earth. Let your thoughts puff away with each breath. As new ones come—knotted as they are with joy or pain—hold them like wounded birds. Set them aside to heal. Breathe.

And your heart: Vulnerability means being *able to be wounded*. Of course, there is resistance. Notice it, and then kneel in the cold, black dirt, and tuck the seeds deep into the cut soil. With your breath and with energy, push them in. Open your heart. Breathe. Tilt your chin up to the heavens and, with eyes closed or looking at the image, look back at the One who gazes at you with great affection. Breathe.

Seeds

Let's begin...Like Van Gogh's sower or like Jesus in the Gospel, in the scarcity and threat of winter we hold close what was given to us in the summer: the memory of a time we were loved; the security and calm of companionship; our lives as they tick along. Perhaps these are our golden seeds, remnants of an abundance that has passed us by.

- *Where are you in the scene? Are you the sower? An observer?*
- *Notice how the ground feels under your feet as you walk the rows. What warmth does the light bring?*
- *Notice the sower's face as he pulls the sun-burnished seeds from his purse. What do these weightless kernels mean to him? How does he feel as they fall from his hand?*
- *How do you feel? What seeds do you hold? What have you held close to protect it from the cold?*
- *Can you pull those seeds from your purse?*

It can feel impossible to let go of what we have been given, to release into the crusted ground what has brought us life. It requires an outrageous courage, an irrational trust in a still-dead world to believe that what dies produces fruit.

Even more, the frosted skin of the soil must be slashed for the seeds to be planted. They must enter the wound.

- *How does it feel to imagine turning over your hand?*
- *Do the seeds carry the golden light as they fall?*
- *What is it like as they enter the furrowed ground?*

But perhaps it is not we who sow. Perhaps it is the Lord who sows and we who are the field.

- *How has God prepared this cold ground for the gift of these seeds? What is God placing within us?*
- *How does it feel to be warmed by the setting sun? Is there any opening to what God is attempting to give?*
- *Are there wounds that you would like the Lord to plant seeds of hope within?*
- *Can you ask for what you desire?*

Ours is a God who sows before the setting sun, who sows before night falls. Speak with the Lord now about what has happened in your prayer. Whether you have felt drawn to watch or to sow or to be a recipient of the good seed, speak with the Lord about what has happened, as one friend speaks to another. We will pause for a minute now in silence.

Concluding Prayer

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Please open your eyes.

Do you feel calmer? Is there anything you would like to share with the group that came to mind?