

# Making Space for God

Descanso Gardens- April 10, 2003

## OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, we come before you as a people too nearly conformed to this world and its values. We fail to develop our God-given abilities and then envy those who do. Too busy for the care of our bodies or the development of our minds and spirits, we neglect the nurture of our own best selves. We serve, but sometimes with resentment because we say "Yes" to the most

insistent caller more than to you. Expecting too much of ourselves, we resent others who seem not to do their share. We waffle between weakness which allows others to walk all over us, and defensiveness which ignores the rights of others. We spend our money on that which is not bread and turn our eyes away from images of those who have no bread. Yet we ignore our own hunger and thirst for you and your righteousness. Transform us by your spirit and renew our minds. May we find the joy and peace that comes from seeking your will, through Jesus, your faithful servant. Amen

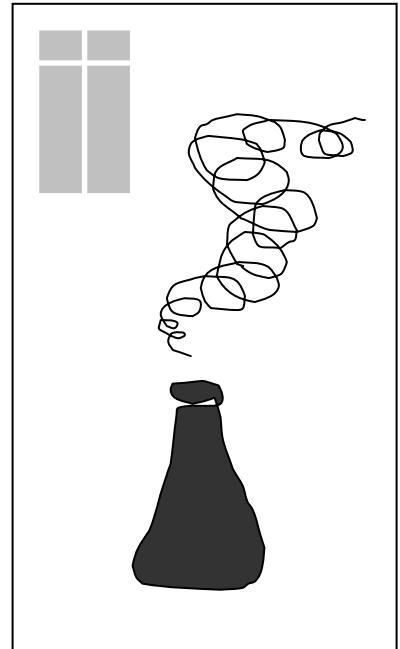
*Ruth C. Duck, Touch Holiness, adapted*

**Arrival-** Take some times to settle yourself in the gardens. Invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last four weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? Offer these to the Lord.

**Scripture Study-** John 12:3-5, 7-8. The season of Lent is about preparation. It is about returning home as the wayward prodigal son to the arms of the loving father. It is about having our blind eyes opened to our Lord and Savior. It is about waiting for the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross.

## Mary

*took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup>But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, <sup>5</sup>"why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ... <sup>7</sup>"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the*



*day of my burial. <sup>s</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.*<sup>1</sup>

Read the passage through a couple of times. What captures your attention? What moves Mary's heart? What does her act of devotion mean? How does Jesus respond to her act of love and to yours? What is the voice of Judas in your world? Who would you like to be like and how would you like to respond?

***Exercise and Rest-*** Take some time to walk around the gardens and enjoy the Lord's creation. It is his gift to you today.

***Reading for Reflection-*** What are these anti-faith forces? They are not the product of some conscious conspiracy by godlessness. They are instead, all those things, good and bad, within us and around us that tempt us away from prayer, from self-sacrifice, from being more communal, from being willing to sweat blood in a garden in order to keep our integrity and commitments, and from mustering up the time and courage to enter deeply into our own soul. Hence they are not abstract, foreign forces. They live in the house with us and are as comfortable to us as a well-worn shoe. What blocks faith is that myriad of innocent things within our ordinary, normal lives which precisely make our lives comfortable: our laziness, our self-indulgence, our ambition, our restlessness, our envy, our refusal to live in tension, our consumerism, our greed for things and experience, our need to have a certain lifestyle, our busyness and overextension, our perpetual tiredness, our obsession with celebrities, and our perpetual distraction with sports, sit-coms and talk shows. These are the anti-mystical forces of our time.

*Ronald Rolheiser in The Holy Longing, page 217*

Among the many things that work against interiority today, three can be singled out as particularly cankerous: *narcissism, pragmatism, and unbridled restlessness.*

Defined simply, narcissism means excessive self-preoccupation; pragmatism means excessive focus on work, achievement, and the practical concerns of life; and restlessness means an excessive need for experience, an overeating, not in terms of food but in terms of trying to drink in too much of life. Narcissism accounts for our heartaches, pragmatism for our headaches, and restlessness for our insomnia. And constancy of all three together account for the fact that we are so habitually self-absorbed by heartaches, headaches, and greed for experience that we rarely find the time and space to be in touch with the deeper movements inside of and around us.

*Ronald Rolheiser in The Holy Longing, page 32*

***Benediction-*** *Lord you have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; for my eyes have seen the Savior whom you have prepared for all the world to see: a Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

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