

Lenten Devotional

*A Broken Heart Transformed:
From Pain to Peace
Through Prayer and Meditation*

Danielle Erwin

Dear Mother,

This devotional is here to help guide you through Lent, in which all are called to die to ourselves as we remember Christ died for us.

We are called to take up our crosses and bear them as He did.

However, we are never alone.

Know that I am praying for you and your baby as you wander through this desert that is grief. You will make it through. Ask our Lord to carry you. "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you, nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31:8

"Then the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

Pax Christi,
Danielle



Day 1 - Waiting

You've prayed and waited, tried, and prayed some more. You feel you're in good health, good hands, like all is right with the world. You feel ready and so open your heart to life. You tell God that you're ready, and although unaware fully of what that means, you give Him your fiat. You give Him your body and soul, and so say you are His handmaid, His doulae, be it done unto you according to His Word. In that moment, you invite Him into your heart, where He remains through everything He asks of you. Every joy and every burden. He, Love Itself, is present through it all. Even in moments you feel devoid of everything, just ask Him for help and lean on Him. Live on prayer and you'll realize He's there, has been there from the beginning, and will be there always.

How many times have you given your fiat, expecting that since you said yes to Him, that all would be well? That only good could come from your yes? When you unite your will with His, the challenge He gives you won't all be easy or without toil. Your fiat is that you give all you do to Him to perfect, your sufferings and your joys.



Day 2 - Trying

And so, you begin to try. It may take months or years. Each time, it becomes more difficult. After all, you gave your fiat, so why doesn't it happen right away? God wants you to keep praying and trusting Him. In these times, especially, when you seem to be in a barren desert, He wants you to grow to rely on Him to fulfill you in ways nothing on earth possibly can. He asks you to trust His perfect timing and His perfect Will. He never gives up on you turning towards Him, He continues to call you by name and wants you to continue trying to walk this road, trusting Him the whole way. Keep remaining open to life. Keep trying.

It's so easy to become disheartened, especially when no fruit seems to be coming from your efforts. When have you come close to giving up? Shutting a door? When have you kept up the fight and seen the fruits of God's handiwork in you? Fulfillment comes not in what you leave behind, but rather it comes when you leave your heart open and invite God in to work through you. He won't give up on you and when one door seems to close, He uses that to open another for you to fulfill His plan for you on this earth.





Day 4 - The Positive Test

Then one day, it appears. Your heart begins pounding. You stare at it in disbelief, wondering if it's really happening to you. That second pink line is there. No, you're not mistaken. It's there. The results sink in, and you ponder these things in your heart. You think of a way to tell your husband. That moment you've waited for has arrived. You both prepare mentally and emotionally for all that this journey entails. Doctor or midwife appointments. Telling family and friends. Birth. Life. So much love from it all. Thinking only of the positive, thinking this will be your only test. You gave your fiat and received what you've waited for. There's no room in your mind for anything else, no inkling of what could possibly go wrong, for there's too much joy. You were open to life and so God gave you a life, but you never thought being open to life meant being open also to the possibility of loss. You thought the only "losses" you would experience were to give up alcohol, comfort, keeping food down, the nausea that comes with pregnancy for most women, but these, to you, are only positive tests.

When in life have you thought you'd encounter smooth sailing and suddenly a storm arises, one which you cannot weather alone? One that sinks your ship, but then He to whom you gave your fiat comes and saves you, pulling you from the water that was drowning you? You remain open to all He has in store.



Day 5 - The Last Supper

You knew something wasn't right, or maybe you were completely blindsided. You may have had a feeling, the pit in your stomach would not subside. Or your day may have been going as planned with no reason to think your world was about to turn upside down. Either way, He was preparing you somewhat for what lay ahead. You went through the day with much on your mind. This is the last supper together. Many lasts before there was even a chance for firsts. You may begin preparing yourself, or continue blissfully going about your daily duties. For some, you'll be nesting, though in a sorrowful way, for you know your heart will be unable to handle things for a while. Regardless, you prepare, for after this last supper, there will be much more, heavier suffering ahead.

You prepare your heart for many things in life as best you can.

In all moments, even the ones you don't see coming, how do you prepare your heart for Him to enter in and help you handle all things? How does it feel when you allow Him to partake in all aspects of your life? In the darkest nights or brightest days, He is waiting to enter in to make your joys more joyful and sorrows less burdensome.



Day 6 - Praying in the Garden

These burdens remain only with you. No one can begin to fathom the depths of pain you will endure. You think of your fiat, your hopes, and dreams for this baby on this earth. Shattered. You remain puzzled, for you did everything right. How could this be? You beg our Lord to let this cup pass from you, but you acknowledge that His will, not yours, be done. For the good Lord, the Author of all Life, giveth and taketh away. He shows you how this earthly life is passing, it is not the end for which we strive. You are growing in understanding that you were meant for a life greater than this, one that is not fleeting, one without pain or loss. You strive to live for eternal life to the best of your ability, you pray for that life, you suffer and offer up your sufferings for that life. You gave Him your fiat and so accept the cup he gives you, even when the cup is not full of joy.

When your cup is filled with joyous things, is it easier to accept than when it contains suffering? Do you try to ignore, or deny it, wishing it to pass from you? Your cup, when taken with His plan for you in mind, led to the same Place, a Joy unsurpassed by anything this earth has to offer. Anything you receive, receive with His will in mind.



Day 7 - The Ultrasound

The feeling in your gut remains and becomes heavier. You feel nauseated and your stomach becomes tight. Fleeting moments of hope and pleading interrupt your worst fears as you are on your way to your ultrasound. You still bargain and plead with the Author of Life to give another chance. You resign yourself to His Will and find peace in these moments, but you still find yourself worrying and hoping the outcome isn't what you fear it to be. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, rooting itself in human hopes and fears. You wish for your baby's life to continue on this earth, but know life in Heaven is your ultimate desire. These moments give you peace. You walk into the room, lay down on the table after donning the sheet below the waist. The ultrasound tech puts gel on your belly and presses the wand gently. She begins her search.

It's mentally taxing to be caught in between not knowing for sure and having a feeling. How often do you find yourself in these moments? What are they like for you? Are you at peace? Do you pray and resign to God's Will? Or do you give your yes, but only on your terms? Yes, but this baby you gave me must still be alive. Lord, I come to do Your Will...but only if it's easy. Rely on Him.



Day 8 - The Cutting Words

You peer at the screen in front of you as the baby lies still. You plead, trying to maintain hope. Maybe baby is napping, although you know deep down this is eternal rest. You ask the tech why your baby isn't moving. She gives no response. She continues to prod your belly, searching for any sign of life. You ask again if baby is napping, trying to be chipper, denying what you know. A third time, you ask why baby isn't moving. Then you hear the words you that will remain imprinted on your heart forever, "I'm sorry, hon, I can't find a heartbeat." The words cut deep like a knife and you feel as if the life has drained from you. You go numb for the moment, but "recover," as your brain tries to protect you from this trauma. The door opens and the doctor walks in. you've known him for several years now, and his kindness and compassion enter the room after you texted your husband that the baby is gone, that you'll call him after the appointment is over. You walk back to the doctor's office, as if you're living someone else's story, not yours. You discuss the next steps. There is no turning back, despite all pleading and bargaining. Those cutting words remain buried deep within your soul, though you try to wish them away. They are now your cross, the words, and the tasks ahead of you. Take up your cross and walk, relying on the Lord for your strength.

In these moments, your brain tries to protect you from the trauma of loss, as if you were encountering a bear. You go into fight, flight, or freeze mode. You enter denial, living and telling the story as if it were someone else's because it's too painful a reality for you to live. What times have you had something sad or disappointing happen and upon releasing tears or emotion-laden words do you feel better? Like you now have space in your brain to do other things? How do you think it will turn out if you hold it all in? Do you think that space will remain, or will it be taken up and not allow you to move forward, to do other things in life as God intends you to? Find that time to live that experience in your heart fully, as you would a joyful experience.



Day 9 - Betrayed by a Kiss

The kiss of death has removed your little one/s from this life. You wonder, then, why a kiss, which denotes love and passion, instead has become something that takes life. You are left pondering all these things in your heart. So many questions beginning with why, and you're led back to the answer: we were not created for this life to be our end, or what would we be living for? We are called to a greater life. Your little baby was called away from this world earlier than you wished. Although you felt betrayed by that kiss of death, your baby's earthly life ending, it remains comforting that the kiss of the Lord is always triumphant over death since He is Life itself! You cling to this hope through your pain and sorrow, and therein do you find your joy.

All things on this earth bring passing joy, including those lives entrusted to you. Oh, how you wish they would stay! But oh, how much happier are you that they are in the Hands of the One Who created them? Your little one has not left you, your little one is in your heart and with the One Who fashioned him or her and loves your baby/ies so much.



Day 10 - The Burial

Giving the body of your little baby over to the ground to be buried within its hard bed is not easy, for this body is the one physical memory you have remaining. Yet, in this and all moments, you continue to remember death on this earth is not the end of life as the devil wishes it to be, your baby will be born into His eternal care. Our Lord suffered, and in this season of Lent, we recall all He did so that we might have life within us, and life after this time on earth. He triumphed over sin with His death. So, as you pull the dirt over the tiniest coffin you've ever seen, look beyond the ground and know it's not the limit. This is not your sweet, precious little one's final resting place. This is not the end.

When you've faced a hardship in your life, how often have you felt that is the end of that part of the journey and that all hope is lost for a good future? And then another, better door is opened, and you see the Lord's plan is greater than you imagined? How much greater now do you rely on that since you feel a huge door is closed and wonder how any good can come of this loss, this hardship?



Day 11 - The Empty Tomb

"He is not here" (Matthew 28:6). You visit your little one's earthly resting place and recall memories of his or her short time here on earth. You weep, letting the tears flow freely as you pray. Yet, your little one resides in a different Place, forever at peace with God, interceding for your peace through this, and all trials. Your baby gently reminds you that he or she is in the Holy Presence of our Lord. You begin to feel enshrouded in Love, especially during the Consecration during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when all of Heaven is present. The earthly tomb is empty, but we pray the Heavenly Room has grown. "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23), you took what talents your Master gave you and allowed Him to grow these talents before returning them to Him.

How often do you rest, thinking you have a talent that will never disappear. Then, when you return to it, you find it diminished? Yet other times, you cultivate that talent, that seed He gave you, and see how much it developed? Think now on the ways in which this, the seed of life he entrusted to you, developed and grew before he or she returned to the Maker.



Day 12 - Reality Hits

"You know with your whole being that your baby is being taken care of by your Heavenly Father, but it is difficult to accept that it means your baby is not being cared for by you. As a mother, you had dreams, and ideas for how to fashion this child He gave you. This takes a toll on your heart, even as you struggle to love and trust God's plan in all of this. Your feelings are valid and allowed. Remember that upon seeing that His friend, Lazarus, had died, Jesus wept. His weeping, though, was not without hope. Tears show your love, just as Christ showed His love for Lazarus. Allow hope to permeate your heart that He may perfect your sorrow and love. It will carry you through as the reality of your earthly loss sets in.

Reality strikes like lightning. It hits at unexpected times in unexpected places, and you're never really sure of the depth of its effects until it happens. How did you make it through those moments? Did prayer soften the blow? Did you find hope through prayer? Christ speaks to you in ways not always understood by us here on earth, His answers don't always come as words spoken to you. Instead, a certain peace may overpower you when you pray. That's Him comforting you.



Day 13 - Letting Go

As the days wear on, you feel the heavy emptiness within your body and soul. The hurt and sorrow remain, and although they will always be there, they will decrease how they impact you and your ability to move through this life. You continue to move through each day, fulfilling your vocation. Each step of the way, our Lord carries you and takes the burden of your suffering as His own. Let Him do with it as He wills. Offer it to Him and although you'll always have memories and will always feel some pain, by giving it to God, it will be more manageable. Letting go means letting God carry you, and each time you suffer, share it all with Him. He will take all your suffering and change it into good. Do not do this on your own, allow Him to take hold. My Lord and my God, I give it all to you, for you know best what to do.

When you let go and let God, what does that feel like? When in your life have you done this? What has happened as a result? Have you let Him into your heart to cultivate the seeds within? He knows best what to do with them, to help you grow so you can become the best version of yourself. He will help you become this person, even during this difficult time. Just let go and let God.



Day 14 - Your Desert

You continue to put it all in His hands, yet you often feel you are in a desert, alone with your grief. You feel you have no one to lean on and it seems friends avoid talking to you about losing your baby. The comfort they could afford you is not present. It seems all have deserted you.

However, they are there on the other side, praying for you, pulling for you to reach the other side, but know this is work you must do. Your hope remains always in the Lord. Fear not, for you know He is with you and will not abandon you. You pray and meditate upon His life, suffering, and death, and so you begin to rely more upon His experience of perfect suffering. You pray for Him to take yours and perfect it while you live in this desert upon this earth.

A desert is a barren wasteland, but it is always surrounded by something good. What are the deserts like in your life? How have you made it through them and what do you see once you do arrive in a surrounding, more fruitful land? Do you learn more about your purpose and the reasons for traveling through that desert? How has Christ used your desert travels for good in your life? Did it help you learn more about yourself and situations you've been in?



Day 15 - Alone with Wild Animals

You feel as if grief, surrounds you like a pack of wild animals about to devour you. There appears to be no way out. You're feeling suffocated by the overwhelming power of these beasts bearing down on you, as if you'll always remain in their power. You're in a pit of despair, longing for help for someone to come and rescue you. You struggle since no one is reading your mind.

All this time, He is calling for you, telling you to turn your weary head towards Him and gaze upon Him. He knows how weak you are feeling and how hard it is for you to pray; how hard it is to even ask Him to come lift you up. If only you say His Holy Name, how great your relief will be! He knows your heart, He will give you the strength you need to utter those Words, and those wild animals you felt surrounded you will suddenly seem less ferocious. The burden will be lessened, and you will no longer find yourself alone with that beast called grief.

When everything is seemingly closing in on you, when you're racking your brain to find some way out, what do you do? Whether at work or at home, trying to desperately find a solution in a moment's time seems daunting, especially on your own. What was it like when you found this solution? How did you arrive at it? Did you allow your mind to rest and invite Him in to take up the space instead?



Day 16 - The Battle with Satan

The pain of grief is a constant storm whose clouds never fully lift, but you learn to weather them. There are many temptations you will encounter along the muddy path, many easier roads to take, but they will not help you truly heal. These are merely band aids that provide temporary relief and allow the pain of grief to fester deep within. These temptations are lined along your desert path, earthly pleasures which the evil one seeks to make you believe will make you happy and end your pain. It may seem true for a little while. Chocolate, wine, other thrilling temptations...they only lead to the desire for more and nothing is healed, nothing is ever satisfied, there is no end. With the devil, you will never be gratified. As St. Augustine said, "Your heart will remain restless til it rests in Him (God). So, surrender yourself, your pains and sufferings, surrender everything to Him, and He will win for you this battle with the devil.

What happens when you turn to these earthly pleasures to solve problems? Have they proven only to be temporary fixes? How does the hole within you feel after the effects of giving into these temptations wears off? What happens when you turn to God instead, relinquishing it all to Him?



Day 17 - Making Bread from Stones

You're weary, tired, hungry for relief. The evil one lays before you a way to take those stones of grief, heavy stones weighing every part of your being down, and forget about them, satisfying your hunger and filling your emptiness. But the satisfaction wears off and you're left yearning again, this time for more than before. Yes, that chocolate surely tasted delicious in the moments you were able to enjoy it, but it left you hungrier and less satisfied than before, and with a scale telling you that it wasn't the wisest decision. Now, you're left worrying about not just the grief from your baby's death, but also the extra weight, which adds to your original grief. The cure is as always, dying to yourself, giving your hunger to God, doing something for someone, writing or talking about your grief with Him and a therapist. Attempting to turn these stones into the bread that is appealing in the moment, the easier path, isn't the most fulfilling. That stone other builders rejected, the one you don't wish to carry either, will become the cornerstone, something greater will come of it, just entrust it to the Lord to make of it what He sees fit. The stones you carry will feel lighter when the Bread you receive is Him.

When do you feel most fulfilled? After a good home cooked meal? The Eucharist? Prayer?



Day 18 - Temptation to Jump

Your struggle with darkness and emptiness on this earth is overbearing. It's so much to handle and you continue to feel as if you're in this alone, like no one cares. You're in perhaps the darkest place you've ever been, your weakest point in life as of yet. You're not sure how to do it anymore. The devil appears once more, with yet another temptation. He tells you it's the easiest and quickest way out. No one wants to feel sadness and deep pain such as this. Your soul struggles. You know God does not wish for you to take this seemingly delicious fruit, but it is appealing nonetheless, especially in the current moment. He doesn't want you to end there. He wants you to lean on Him, allow Him to lead you through to the other side of this. Pray, say His Name, for this is powerful enough. Continue to say It, never ceasing. Tears may cascade down your face, allow them. They are the release of all the hurt, pain, and sadness pent up within you, the sum of all the things overshadowing you. His Holy Name, Jesus, is bringing about healing when you let Him come in. He is pushing out all the heaviness you carry, helping you to relinquish your hold on the overpowering burden you carry. The devil has tempted you once more in this desert, once more tried to overpower God's Love, yet the evil one will not prevail in this, his temptation to make you jump.

What other times in your life has a powerful feeling subdued every part of you, making it seem like the easiest path is to just not face it? To jump, so to speak? To end it all? How have you overcome this temptation by the evil one? God is the Author of Life, let Him help you even in your darkest hours. He has blessed the world with many a good helper in professional therapists and spiritual directors. Many do His work, guiding those who sorrow, letting Him work through them, walk with and bring comfort to the mourning. Do not hesitate to seek help through these amazing servants of God.



Day 19 - These Can Be Yours

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Day 20 - Illusions of the Heart

So often you are tempted to walk away from the suffering of grief. It would be so much easier, at least for the moment. Going into denial will not lead to ultimate relief or a better version of yourself. Immediate relief sounds nice, though, but it is by accepting it and embracing your grief, your cross, that will help bring about lasting peace from this turmoil within. Garth Brooks says it well in his 1993 hit, "Standing Outside the Fire," when he says, "You've got to be tough when consumed by desire 'cause it's not enough to be standing outside the fire." Standing outside your grief won't solve anything, but accepting it as your cross, allowing Christ to carry you through the pain of the flames, this is how you will arrive at true peace. There are many illusions the heart is tempted to follow, but only Truth will set you free. Only in Christ will you find this true Peace. Then, your heart will beat peacefully free.

When faced with grief, difficulties from the past and now, even, avoiding them and remaining in denial may seem a good solution. Will doing this help you process through everything? Will standing outside this fire help you become who Christ would like you to become? What did He do when faced with suffering because of Truth?



Day 21 - Hope in the Wasteland

Despite knowing in your head and in your heart that things of this earth are only temporary reliefs, it remains difficult to give yourself to God and place all your trust in Him. He is omnipresent, although you don't see Him as you would another person, standing in front of you. You may feel abandoned since only you seem to be understanding your grief fully. He speaks in a way unlike that which we are accustomed to, a way far superior to any other, the way that will lead us to Him. It is the way that will provide us solace. He gave us each other so we may be led to Him, to realize "our help is in the Lord" (Psalm 121:2). We are always left wanting when we turn anywhere except towards Him. Human words offer us comfort, but when they are rooted in Him, they provide so much more hope while we journey in this wasteland.

When you hear words from others, how easy is it to think they couldn't understand, they don't know what you're going through? Or do you wonder if your words and emotions are a burden to them? Through this walk you're on, you find those friends whose hearts are rooted in Christ, for He will shine through them and will be there for you in ways you may not readily understand. Hold on tight, for as tends to be the case through processing, it will hit you that the person or people God placed in your life are helping you. Maybe it won't be in the way you want in the moment, but perhaps it'll be wisdom you needed and that ends up pulling you through.



Day 22 - The Distant Light

When the earthly light fades, the light by which you have been guided thus far, there remains a light far off in the distance. You are captivated by it, drawn to it more strongly than the previous flickers offered by the past brief, yet appealing, flares of this world. It is then when you know there is hard work to be done, but this light will be worth it, for it far surpasses all others in its brightness and duration. The temporary comforts you have been afforded have drawn you away from this Light, but now that they have all dimmed, you now see this one, beckoning you to come. This Light is Christ, He Who never gives up on you, Who always seeks you out, allows you to fall so that when you come to Him, it will be out of Love. You will desire no other, you will have come to a deeper understanding of Who He is. By waiting and extending His Love and Mercy to you, He helps you understand His Love for you even more. Just trust His plan for you, despite the arduous journey you will embark upon towards that distant Light.

He was told that He could get off the hook if He just told everyone He's not the King of Heaven and Earth. He was told that He wasn't strong enough, to just let go of this. How often has the devil tempted you to just let go of some love? Something that wasn't easy, but something that proved worth it in the end? How did you find the strength to pull through?



Day 23 - The Cup of Love

You ask God to let this cup pass from you, but with His help, realize that it is because of love that you embrace this cup, allowing it to come to you. You love your baby so much, the pain is the hole left inside you, the absence of the baby you love. You wish your baby were still alive within you, for this nightmare of grief to end, to wake up in a better reality. You feel this pain because of your love. Allow yourself to feel this love deeply, ponder it, let it permeate your being. Now think of how Christ loves us so much it hurts. His Passion – the scourging, the crown of thorns, denial by a friend, betrayal by another friend, nails in his hands and feet, a lance piercing His side, struggling with every breath on His Holy Cross, by which He took all suffering and sin upon Himself and redeemed the world. All these things, all the pain was for us, because He wants us so badly to be with Him from this day forward in Paradise. We, too, must accept our suffering, praying to recognize and embrace the presence of His Love in it all. The sacrifice of ourselves when we said yes to Him, giving ourselves over to the Father's Will, accepting the cup of love He gave you – with all it entails.

It's easier to take the good and leave the bad and ugly. Retrace your steps, think back to moments you wanted to leave the pain and take the pleasure, but ultimately one accompanied the other. Was it easier to just accept both at the beginning? How did you handle it then? In what ways can you keep your eyes on the prize, the eternal reward of Heaven?



Day 24 - Accepting His Help

You're so deep in the well of your tears, you feel you'll be stuck there forever. As a matter of fact, you don't think you'll ever recover. Despite knowing all Christ went through, you wonder how He could possibly help YOU right now, in this moment. You fear that since you can't talk to His face as you would another person's, He won't answer you. Talking to Him doesn't feel the same since it's not comparable to conversations you're accustomed to, so you turn to something tangible and audible, denying His help. In good times, it has been easy to talk to Him to offer praise and thanksgiving since you don't seek responses for that, but this time, it's different. You've asked in prayer, but it seems like He doesn't care. There's no relief from your grief. There's no answer on a huge neon sign. Yet he wants us to persist in prayer, showing our devotion and total trust in Him, just as in times when the outcome is good. He wants us to share everything with Him. We don't worry or fret, just totally relied on Him and felt joy. Sure, it was hard work, but He led you through it as He will lead you through this difficult time. He wants us to deepen our relationship with Him by building our trust and accepting His help in good times as well as bad.

In times when the outcomes are good and you share with Him prayers of thanksgiving, how do you feel? You feel amazing when something good happens to you, how much better do you feel when you share it with the Lord? When something bad happens, then, how much better do you think you will feel if you share it with Him? He makes all things better! As we read in Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."



Day 25 - Truth

Maybe this is your first pregnancy loss, or perhaps you've had numerous. Either way, grief is a path you wish to avoid. You may try to figure out the best way to do it, asking others for advice, or living in denial because you are afraid of what grief entails. You may be disconnected from your feelings to avoid having to navigate this painful route. All these things will only lead you in circles, becoming a vicious cycle. Each round will be more difficult than the previous one since it is harder to become well again if you don't experience the troubles first. Maybe you see weakness if you weep, but remember Jesus wept. The Omnipotent grieved. He is fully Human and fully Divine, the God-man, and HE wept. If, like Pontius Pilate, you look to others to solve your problems from grief, you might be misguided and/or left to your own tortuous and more difficult decision making. Look up, not around, and you will find through His example and the Words He gave us in the Bible the courage and strength you need to follow the path He will lead you down, the path to Truth.

Think of times when you and friends had a similar task. Did you all go about accomplishing it the same way? How did you determine which direction to go? How did you figure out how to accomplish your task? In the same way, you will be led on the path of your grief story.



Day 26 - The Others

The world is filled with many societies focused on the self – what can make *me* happy? What is the easiest path? And so, when sad and traumatic events occur, like a pregnancy loss, it's not always easy for people to empathize. When Christ was put in front of the others and they were given the decision by Pilate, they chose the murderer because they wanted to do what others were doing, they were too afraid to choose Christ for what might happen to them. So perhaps some think the quickest and easiest way out is to get over it, so that's the type of response they give, as if your broken heart can be ignored and pushed aside. Loved ones may tend to direct you to do this, to hold captive and put to death the good that comes of allowing grief to be expressed, not realizing it will make you more whole again. They may tend to think it's better to release the guilty prisoner, the murderer of your true happiness, grief retained. This will only lead to grief piling upon grief, and nothing will get better. Like our Lord's road to Calvary, this road called grief will be painful, but in the end, you will find it to have been worth it.

When you plant a seed on a rocky path, it won't flourish. Nor will it flourish if you plant it among vines, it'll be choked. So, when you have been dealt a difficult decision in the past, have you listened when others ignored you or instructed you to ignore it or take a simpler way out? What has come of that? Has it been the case that the same decision remains, along with other choices you now must make in order to chop down the vines in order for the initial decision to grow and become fruitful? How do you see your road to grief playing out if grief is restricted, left unattended and unfelt? Will it make its way back and be even harder to handle?



Day 27 - The Scourge and Blame

All the pain Christ endured, including the scourging at the pillar, was for our sins. He took them all upon Himself and carried the burden we can't carry. Yet He is sinless, wholly undeserving of the punishments He received for crimes He never committed. Never once did He blame Himself for the sins, never was He at fault for any of them, but because of His Love for us, He gladly bore the pains. And so, remember the pain you feel is borne out of love! Also remember you are not the Author of Life. That remains our Father's job, He Who art in Heaven and hallowed be His Name. No doubt you may feel guilt, as if you controlled this outcome. Guilt is a part of grief, but even in these times that are difficult to turn to prayer, ask for His Peace to be upon you, His Mercy to be shown to you, and His Love to hold you. Rest assured you did not have the final say in your baby's premature death. Sure, you can run through all the things you could have done differently, but ultimately, He has the final say. You may have done everything right, but in the end, rest in that fact that this was out of your control. Others and you may place blame on you, but they did the same to Him; He was and remains without fault. Remember that through any discovery or understanding, you may reach, life's very existence is up to God, not you or others. Don't beat yourself up, turn to God, and remember the scourge is part of your purge.

Can you control the seasons? Death of flowers? You might water and place this flower in the right amount of sunlight, ensuring it has the proper warmth, but even here, God controls its life. Same with the human race. You might provide all that is necessary, but since death became part of this world, it is unavoidable.



Day 28 - Your Crown

As if scourging Christ at the pillar wasn't enough, the soldiers thrust a crown of thorns into His Sacred Head, mocking Him, the pain of our sins pressing deeper than we can imagine. They added insult to injury, not understanding who He is. He continued to go on this path, even though He could have chosen any other way of saving us. He chose to put our sins to death with His death on the Cross. He shows us how "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things" (1Cor13:7). Love remains through good times and bad, for better or worse. So, when the thorns of seeing other pregnant moms, baby pictures, baby formula ads, baby clothes, an invite to a baby shower, or any reminder of the pain of your loss dig in, you CAN make it through this. Love, Himself, will carry you. He Who is Love and Who DOES bear all things, will carry you and your burden; He will be there for you always.

In marriage, you promise to remain through the good and the bad, you rely on love between you and your spouse, as well as the Love Christ shows to you, to carry you through. When there arise difficulties in your marriage, especially when you suffer a pregnancy loss, do you encounter rough times? Does there seem to be a chasm of sorts? How has this been resolved before? How can you, with Christ and the resources on this earth He has given us, work through this?



Day 29 - Calvary

His road to Calvary wasn't easy, but He had His Father's strength. There were steps and rocks, soldiers continuing to mock and beat Him, showing Him no mercy. Only a few comforted Him or were with Him the whole way. His Mother and St. John never left His side. St. Veronica wiped His face. Simon the Cyrenian reluctantly helped Him carry His Cross. His road to glory was uphill and treacherous. It took hard work and much help from The Father, but He desired our salvation so badly that he continued on. Your road to calvary will have pains and obstacles, it won't be easy, but call upon the Lord for strength and grace to handle it and to understand the greater purpose in each moment along the way. You will struggle and that's okay, for it is in these and all moments God wants us to know we can't rely on our own strength He wants us to call on Him so He may show us how His love is ever present. Nothing good or bad is possible to walk through without Him. Call on Him, follow Him, praise Him – that in all things, God may be glorified!

What other times in your life have you had a greater purpose pull you through the not-so-easy tasks en route to the end? How often did it seem hopeless and never ending? How did you make it through? Keep focused on the greater purpose He has in store for you, even though you may not know what that is yet. He will make things known to you in due time. Meanwhile, offer all your sufferings up to Him that He might perfect them and that you might glorify Him and help others known Him through you.



Day 30 - Falling

The weight of the wood and the pangs of our sins led Him to fall. Yet He continued to rise each time, sin did not triumph. Just as was the case when He died on that wood, death did not triumph. His death gives us another chance at eternal life, yet He doesn't force us to choose as He wishes. He is there for us to call upon Him, but because He loves us, He wants us to freely choose Him. When you fall under the weight of this cross you have been given, He does the same. Because of original sin, death entered the world, yet by His Love, He gave us all another chance at life. He wants you to ask Him to help, to accept all Love and Mercy He has for you. Sometimes it's hard not to rely on your own methods and thoughts, and so you fall multiple times. Each time, call upon Him and He will raise you up. He allows you to fall so you come to a deeper understanding of how much you need Him. You begin to realize, appreciate, and love Him even deeper than before. You see that His Love is always there and will always wait for you.

What is it like when you try to carry your cross on your own? Do you find yourself constantly trying to figure out how to best do it? Do you give it to Him in prayer? How does it feel, then?



Day 31 - No Rest

Weary and broken, you find no respite in the words that are spoken. The world continues spinning around, you've traveled each avenue you've found. You continue on this lonely path while others have gone away. It's not their pain or suffering to bear, so you walk in your rain alone. There is no rest on this earth, your heart is put to the test of love. You realize as before, your heart remains restless til it rests once more in Him. Our Savior wasn't allowed rest, despite all the pain that He endured. He found no rest on this earth. He didn't rest until He returned to His Father in Heaven, until that glorious moment in time, that very moment He was free from the pains inflicted on Him on earth. Although He knew there was to be no rest here, He continued to have hope, as did Our Lady, despite their many sorrows. Through that hope, they found joy, which isn't in earthly rest or pleasures, but in the future, in Heavenly Treasures. Have you looked forward to a break, a time to recharge? Isn't it funny how you look forward to that moment, but then it's gone in the blink of an eye? All things on this earth pass quickly and the only true rest is when we find peace in Him. All your anxieties, stresses, and sorrows while on this earth can only be quelled when you give them to Him and allow Him to reside in you. Then things of this world will not have the same effect as they would if He wasn't within you. Rely, then, on Him to provide you rest from your troubles.



Day 32 - Alone

Many people surrounded Christ, yet didn't grasp the amount of suffering He was going through or what it meant for them. No one other than God understands fully everything Christ felt as He labored on. People would notice Him and see that He was suffering, struggling, yet returned their gazes to their daily tasks. Even now, it's hard to grasp a full understanding of His Love. Imagine the loneliness He felt, yet He found solace in His Father, Mother, and others who offered Him comfort. He alone, however, carried the physical cross. Those who love you don't understand what it's like for you to suffer this loss. Despite the world surrounding you, everyone returns to their tasks, perhaps after offering their attempt at words of comfort. Pray and carry your cross as our Lord did, knowing you're the only one who can do so, although you have His help and His example.

Reflect on times in which you have rejoiced at an accomplishment or something good that has happened to you. Have others shared in the excitement or understood it so deeply as you have? How did you feel in those moments? How did you carry yourself then? So many people have spoken so many words, attempting to comfort you, they've remained with you, but you still feel so alone. They won't know fully what you've gone through.



Day 33 - Simple Kindnesses

On this, your calvary, you'll face many who don't return your gaze, your longing for any comfort or desire to show them love. Your faith in humanity wanes. Yet along the way, there are the St. Veronicas who are there to greet you and offer the simplest, yet most heartfelt kindnesses. Perhaps it's a therapist or friends who've gone through this before and understand somewhat the compassion you need. Or maybe a friend organizes a meal train for your family, helping remove some of your burdens so you might focus on your healing. St. Veronica offered Christ what she could on a road that only He could walk. She wiped His Face, His bloody, sweaty, tear-stained face. She offered Him the simple kindness of being there for Him, even if it was but for a moment. This simple love is what you desire, to be seen and cared for, heard, and understood. There will be those along this path you trod. They fill your heart with more joy than if you were to encounter them the entire time. You continue to hope, pray, and rejoice when you are thrown these lifelines, these simple kindnesses.

When throughout life has a beautiful kindness appeared out of the blue? How has this unexpected blessing made you feel?



Day 34 - Sharing Your Wood

Your wood is heavy and hard to carry. You want to share more of it with your husband, but there is only so much he can carry. Simon the Cyrenian could only do so much when he carried Christ's cross with Him, but sharing in His burden helped, nonetheless. You do have to do a lot of work, and so does he. His work may look different, his process and road to recovery will be different, but you both will share the weight of your cross together. Perhaps it will be hard for each of you to understand the others perspective and so one or both of you may feel alone and misunderstood. Remember you were physically attached to your baby, whereas all he may have known were the ultrasound pictures, your growing belly, and the feel of the kicks from the outside. Since you carried your child within your womb, you will feel the loss and the emotions attached to it more deeply and at different times than he does. Perhaps the things he does are helping you, maybe he's taking other loads and worries off your shoulders so you are able to spend time with your emotions and processing your baby's death. It's hard for you to see this sometimes, especially when you want him to be with you and meet you where you are. Trust that the Lord is working through the man He gave you to share in life's crosses, though he may bear them differently than you.

In what ways has your husband helped you so you can focus on your grieving and healing? What ways have you wished he would help? Have you asked him to help you in these ways?



Day 35 - The Pain of the Nails

Every day is different. Every time you are reminded of your loss, the pain cuts deeper. Your heart continues to be penetrated by the sharpness and relentlessness of these nails. You can't avoid them, they're part of the road you're on, just as they were a part of His. He felt our sins being driven deeper into His Hands and Feet. He knew it was part of this journey of ultimate Love, so He waited in excruciating pain and agony, thinking of Love. It is because of love that you, too, are walking this journey and feeling the nails being driven deeper. Love is that which is given to us by Him, especially for our children. When you lost your baby, that pain comes in deeper, stronger waves and isn't simply wished away. Rather, you must wade through it, even when the going gets tougher.

In what ways has the pain of your loss hit you harder? What makes it worse? When the pain comes, how do you handle it? Do you handle with love and care? Take in the feelings and take care of yourself by allowing yourself to feel them? To remember love, painful as it is?



Day 36 - In Paradise

Our Lord said to the man on the cross beside Him, the thief who asked for His Mercy and forgiveness, "Amen I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The thief, who deserved his punishment, humbled himself and by the grace of God saw Jesus for Who He really is, unlike the thief on the other side who tested Him and told Him to save Himself if He is Who He says He is. Both got what was coming to them – the one thief had his eyes pecked out and the other was rewarded by sharing in the Beatific Vision. In that moment, the good thief's heart was opened, and he was with our Lord in Paradise. Remember, too, that He is taking care of your little one/s. Find some comfort in knowing that they're interceding on your behalf that you all may be with Him one day in Paradise!

How often do you feel like God should have saved you from this pain since He is Omnipotent? As difficult as it is to fathom desiring this, how much better for your eternal life is it to have this soul, once a part of you, interceding for you? As hard as it was to lose your baby, remember he or she is now in Our Lord's care.



Day 37 - Forgiveness

Christ called out these words on the cross as we read in Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Perhaps you wonder the same as you walk through this valley of tears. You may also think about times some duty went unfulfilled. Yet Christ forgave you and welcomed you back. In your moments of despair, though you may feel forsaken, forgive others, and welcome them back in if you wish them to be there. They may have seemed to forsake or avoid you if they didn't know what to do for you originally after your loss, or it may have been difficult for you to understand that only you could do this.

When have you said something and later that day, replayed in your head how you sounded when you said it? Or a thousand different ways it could have been said differently? Have you examined how it made the recipient feel? Did you wish for your words or actions to have a different effect? In these moments, we realize we are only human and do things imperfectly.



Day 38 - It is Finished (John 19:30)

You have been on a long and bumpy road, one which has been filled with uncertainties, woes, and pain you never thought you'd have to endure. Now, this part of your road through grief is finished. You've received the last drink and so now, you are ready for the next part of your life. Although grief is not linear and you may experience the same things again, you will grow around your grief, using all you have learned from each experience. This pain you've held within is the one you're ready to relinquish. It is okay to release your tears, cry out to Him, grieve, feel sad. Don't hold it in. It is finished. Christ wiped away all debt owed by mankind. All worry and sadness, He bore upon Himself. He wants us to give it over to Him. Now? It is truly finished. At the end of every road is the beginning of a new one. Yet on every new road, you take what you've learned on to help you better navigate as you learn you way around. How do you think you can take what you have learned from one part of grieving to help you in the next?







Day 41 - Our Lady

As a mother, turn also to Our Lady, Christ's Mother, who understands loss as a mother better than any other. Ask her to console you, to intercede for you. She understands your grieving heart and will pray to her Son on your behalf. She is pure of heart and all she asks of Him is granted since she wants only His will to be done.

In all your moments, you rely on Christ for help. In moments when you are so weak it is hard to do more than weep those bitter tears, give them to Our Lady so that she might perfect them into desires aligning with His Will for you.

When have you asked her for help? What has happened as a result? In those moments you asked her aid, how did she turn it into something more by taking all you had within you and perfecting it to be received by Our Lord?



Day 42 - His Mercy Endures Forever

Your little ones were never afforded the chance for the Sacrament of Baptism here on Earth, but Our Lord knows your heart desired Baptism by water and the Word. Our merciful Lord hears your hearts plea and desires eternal peace for your little one/s taken too soon. Thus, we trust in His infinite Mercy, for He descended into Hell to bring those into Heaven who didn't deserve Hell. And so, rest assured He is taking care of your little ones.

Even when you can't physically do something, He knows what is in your heart. Even when you don't understand what it is you're being pulled towards, He does. How has He helped you understand His Will for you amidst your grief?



Day 43 - He is Risen

Like Christ, you will endure earthly sorrows and struggles, but it is how you struggle and what you do with these trials that can help you along your path. Christ suffered, but did so out of love. Remember that the suffering you are enduring because you lost your baby is because you love your baby. With love comes sacrifice. You gave your fiat to Him, continue to trust Him as our Lady did. She gave her fiat knowing somewhat the pain that was to follow. You gave yours knowing that your job is to form your little one as best you can, and prepare him or her until Christ calls him or her from this world. Now rest assured your baby is in His tender care, interceding for you that by His mercy, we may all be with Him forever in Heaven. This is the greatest joy we pray for, to be with Him. Risen.

How do you prepare yourself to meet the Bridegroom? What else can you do amidst your trials and tribulations to ready yourself for the Feast? Do you see yourself and understand yourself differently since you've experienced the loss of your baby? How so? Has everything brought you closer to Christ by being given a deeper understanding of His Love?



You have finished one of many parts of the journeys you will travel. Some will be easier than others, but in every one of them, I hope you always remember to rely on Christ, giving to Him all your joys and sorrows, worries and woes, so that He might perfect them and that your will and His might be aligned. All this, so He may bring you to rest in everlasting Joy, Peace, and Love that is Heaven.