

Ash Wednesday Service

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Sister Marie Therese "MT" Summers, OSB, Prioress

Benet Hill Monastery, 3190 Benet Ln, Colorado Springs, CO 80921

In today's reading from Joel, we are called to rend our hearts, not our garments.

Perhaps now more than ever, we need to heed the call to rend our hearts, not our garments, as we experience:

- the unknowns of tomorrow.
- the discomfort of our world at war (29 wars worldwide).
- our polarization on so many levels: personal, political, spiritual.
- our polarization with so many issues: racism, climate change, migration of masses of people, unleashed gun violence and economic disparity.

Rending a garment was done when there was great anguish, despair, death, and sorrow. It allowed mourners to express their grief through a controlled act of destruction. It helped dissipate anger.

I offer these ever so humbling random thoughts from my reading and pondering on the Lenten Series we are offering these five weeks of Lent: **a journey of transforming grace during polarizing times.**

What are some ways to rend our hearts?

- Rending your heart is an interior journey that touches upon deep inner work. It can involve shadow work where we have hidden our darkest side.
- It is a spiritual quest that requires fortitude and endurance.
- We become aware of the dynamics of how our thoughts influence the depths of our being that in turn affect our actions.
- It is looking with uncertainty beyond the old choice of clear-cut answers to a softer, more permeable aliveness sprinkled with compassion and kindness.

- It is replacing harsh judgement with tenderness.
- We dare to wrap our lives around life-giving questions and live our way into the answers in bettering the world we want and need, rather than grumbling at the state of our world.
- We offer healing love beyond those with whom we have much in common and include those with whom we disagree.
- We keep our eyes alert for a new way to embrace vulnerability as we learn to welcome in inclusive and expansive ways.
- We dare to hold the suffering and the pain in the presence of the chaos of war, division, and grief rather than numbing out with distractions that insulate us from the hurt it brings to our hearts.
- We open our ears that we might welcome the words of differences and have the courage to make space for an unexpected shift deep within our spirit for that unknown future.
- We are unafraid to speak with God's words, listen for God's invitation that comes through human beings, and dare to forgive and be forgiven as we listen more deeply.

These times beckon us to this journey of transforming grace and rending our hearts. It will not be easy. It will be hard, and it will test our resilience, but let us trust in our God as we respond to these three words: **rend our hearts.**