



A SIX WEEK LENTEN STUDY

(Based on "Holy Habits: Gladness and Generosity")

When we think about Lent, our minds go to giving up things as a reminder of what Jesus was willing to give up for us. Sometimes, people think of it as a penance. This study shows how we can have a generosity of spirit and joy in giving.

Each week one of the four contributors to this series shares a reflection based on the scripture reading. The *Holy Habits* is a way of life to be lived by the disciples of Jesus, both individually and collectively. They ask that we keep our hearts and minds open to the Holy Spirit and be alert to the wonders of God's grace and the signs of God's love that emerge as we live this down-to-earth, holy way of life that Luke (Acts 2:47), invites us to imitate.

WEEK THREE: RECLOTHED

Reading: Isaiah 61:1-3

Reflection: There is so much pain in the world. The poor, the broken-hearted, the captives and the prisoners, those who mourn and grieve, the despairing: they are everywhere. They are us.

How can we possibly be glad in the face of all that hurts, all that is unjust, all that takes our courage and tramples it in the cold, hard light of reality? What is the good news that will set us free?

Seven centuries after the prophet Isaiah delivered his hopeful message, a man stood up in a synagogue in the town of Nazareth and proclaimed that this scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing. You can read about it in Luke 4. Jesus Christ is God's comfort to a broken world. His life, death and resurrection give all of us reason for hope and a source of joy.

Our gladness in the face of all that is wrong is a 'display of his splendour' – a testament to the spiritual gift of joy in God through the Spirit. During the times our emotions register no joy, gladness becomes a discipline, a spiritual practice. We have to choose to wear the crown of beauty and the garment of praise.

Reading: Psalm 30:11 “You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,”

Whether or not it matches our mood today, put on the garment of praise.
Worship the God who is the source of all joy and comfort.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the good news referred to at the beginning of this passage?
2. How was the life of Jesus a fulfilment of this passage?
3. Why does God choose the poor, the grieving, and the prisoners through which to display his splendour?
4. What does it mean to put on a ‘garment of praise’?
5. When have you chosen to praise God in the midst of a terrible situation?
6. What impact did it have on you and those around you?

SUGGESTION:

Think about specific needs among those you know. Make a list. Perhaps someone’s washing machine has broken and they can’t afford to replace it. Maybe you know a single mother who needs free babysitting or a pensioner who can’t take care of their garden any longer. See how many of the items on the list you can tick off over the next week or two.

IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

1. In what ways does the practice of generosity increase our spiritual health?
2. In times of distress people often kindly say, “*Do let me know if there is anything I could do to help.*” Might you need to ask for or receive some help at the moment? If so, let someone bless you with generosity. Many of us are happy to give but reluctant to receive.

