

*‘Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant Bride’*

*(Eph. 5: 25b-27a)*

# Radiant

## FORTY DAYS

*of Prayer and Fasting for the Church*

Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>—Sunday, Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**O**UR WHOLENESS depends on our home, the church. How we relate to her determines the state of our hearts; in turn, our witness of mercy and truth helps her become radiant. We are her! Who we are and how we love her can make her shine. It’s no good insisting that important leaders change. We can change and ask Jesus to employ our membership to impart His will to His Church.

During these forty days, we will ask Jesus to unite our hearts to His Body. We can choose to lay down one thing precious to us and instead reflect upon the daily reading and pray through the prayer at the end of each reading, combined with the daily prayer for our pastors and for the expansion of hearts for the greater Body of Christ. As we ask Him to clarify our membership, and to embrace fellow members more graciously, may we become radiant together, the Bride who has made herself ready for Jesus.

This newsletter is a prayer guide for the fast that begins on Wednesday October 12th and ends on Sunday November 20th. The Desert Stream Ministries staff will gather each day to pray at 3pm, CST. Will you join us at whatever time you can?



## Daily prayer

'I lift up Pastor(s) \_\_\_\_\_. Strengthen them; they have tough jobs. I release \_\_\_\_\_ to Your care, Jesus (an expression of Christ's body that has damaged me or that I judge unworthy.) As You have had mercy on me, so I extend mercy to them. Free me to be and do all that You will for Your Bride. In particular, increase my desire to \_\_\_\_\_ for Your beautiful Bride.' (to be prayed in conjunction with the smaller prayer after each day's reading.)



## Prayer and Fasting Guide

OCTOBER 12-16

### WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 12TH

When I talk about the Church, I am talking about you. You are the Church, a member of Christ the Head who when joined with fellow members comprises a beautiful expression of His body. Without you, the Church is not whole. Your gift matters! If you are not a part of her, she suffers. She fails to represent her Savior according to Jesus' good purpose. He has called you to be a member of His house in order to make it a clearer reflection of Himself.

*'Renew my love for my church, O God. Remind me that my gift there matters to You.'*

### THURSDAY OCTOBER 13TH

Throughout his letters to the Corinthians, St. Paul refers to who we are as individual 'temples' of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6: 19) then applies that truth to who we are as members of the greater temple, the Church. That means that the integrity of our personal temples impacts the whole Church! We are joined together, one member linked to all other members. So we ask Jesus to deepen His way in us, so that we might build up His house according to the rebuilding He is doing in our personal lives.

*'My temple matters, O God, to the greater temple You are building Jesus. Make me an honorable member who makes others honorable too.'*

### FRIDAY OCTOBER 14TH

It is easy to dismiss one's gift to the Church. One can cite a host of saints and feel lost in a glittering galaxy of holiness. On the ground, we may have experienced some leaders as dismissive of us, our offering not worthy of their time or attention. Only Jesus can remind us that the Cross establishes a level playing field where each member is shoulder-to-shoulder—many members, different functions. Popes mingle with paupers, bishops with busboys (1 Cor. 12:27). We can look upward,

Do you  
not know that  
your bodies are  
temples of the  
Holy Spirit, who is  
in you, whom you  
have received from  
God?

1 Cor. 6:19

choose to reflect His glory, and not allow others to leech the light He has given us to make His house great.

*'Forgive us for thinking like mere men, not members of Christ. May we treasure what You deem valuable in us for building Your house. Let us shine for You, Jesus.'*

## SATURDAY OCTOBER 15TH

Jesus loves our littleness. A diamond need not be huge to be valuable. A prayer, an encouraging word, a helping hand, a cry for mercy that releases others to cry out—our gift to the Church may be like the tiny mustard seed that grows into a sheltering, nourishing tree (Matt. 13:31, 32).

*'We ask for grace to be small AND significant. Teach us how one does not cancel out the other. Shine on our smallness like a jewel of Your design and setting.'*

## SUNDAY OCTOBER 16TH

God gives His Kingdom to children. He withholds His self-revelation from the wise and powerful and gives it to the simple, the humble, the small (Matt. 11:25, 26). Whenever I get sucked into the church political and feel myself caught in the undertow of men's traditions, I offer myself again on the altar of mercy and seek out little ways I can show mercy to little ones.

*'Reduce me, O God, to childlike wonder over all the good You have given me though Your beautiful bride, and all You will to give through me. Renew the child who can laugh and cry and rejoice in Your house again.'*

*For in the  
day of trouble he will keep  
me safe in his dwelling; he  
will hide me in the shelter of  
his sacred tent and set me  
high upon a rock.*

*Ps. 27:5*



# Prayer and Fasting Guide

OCTOBER 17 - 21

## MONDAY OCTOBER 17TH

Pictures can help us to see from the heart, like a child. St. Paul paints for us a dazzling one in Ephesians 2:19-22 when he envisions us as members of a living, breathing temple being built together by the Spirit of the living God, 'on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus as our chief cornerstone.' (v. 20). I see jewels of different types and colors being plucked from other purposes (we 'who are no longer aliens but now members of God's household' v.19) and set into a flexible swaying skyscraper that is ever-growing in size and beauty.

*'Open our eyes to see Your masterful hand at work in placing us where You will in the emerging temple of Your design. Open our eyes to the beauty of Your house.'*

## TUESDAY OCTOBER 18TH

Another picture. A friend of mine showed me a painting of a beautiful woman in a bridal gown who had fallen into a river; she was still lovely but muddy and disoriented. Right away I knew that was me, was us, the Bride of Christ, and that the strong Man coming to help her was Jesus Himself. We members of Christ are at once beautiful and broken, in continual need of holy rescue. We are dirty children of a faithful Father! Alleluia!

*'Free us to be works-in-progress. May our stains not blot out the beauty that You see and continually reclaim in us.'*

## WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 19TH

I remember 1 Corinthians 12:26—'God gives greater honor to the parts that lack honor'—and am filled with wonder. God sets weak and defiled ones like me into His house and employs His members to cover us in our shameful nakedness. What a wonderful God we serve! He restores the honor of the chronically shamed: He washes us through merciful members so we can reflect His glory. All glory to God!

*'May we never cease to marvel over the gift of His Church. Thank You Jesus for how Your members help exchange our rags for the riches of mercy—honor for dishonor, strength for weakness, full belonging instead of an orphan's shame.'*

## THURSDAY OCTOBER 20TH

Recognizing our need for the Church is as important as recognizing the gift we can be to her. She is the 'pillar and foundation of the truth' (1 Tim. 3:15), the Rock against which 'hell will not prevail' (Matt. 16:19). Many of us live near the fault-line of familiar sins, sins which the world frame as treasures worth dying for. More

*With joy you will  
draw water from the  
wells of salvation.*

*Isa. 12:3*



than ever, we need to find our footing on the Rock, the Church's mercy and the dignifying call to chastity. 'In the day of trouble, He will keep me safe and hide me in His dwelling, setting me high upon the Rock' (Ps. 27:5).

*'Show us, O God, how we need to be knit into fellowship, tight enough to know the treasure of His members better than the bling of sexy idols.'*

## FRIDAY OCTOBER 21ST

Jesus feeds us in His house. We are a people rich with desire. When filled with good things, we thrive; misdirected hungers can divide and destroy us. So we want to join the banquet continuously in His house. Jesus modeled that 'meal' through holy and affectionate exchanges with His disciples. He taught them with words, Kingdom adventures, and the Bread of Life, His body and blood (John 6), through which He promised to sustain them in His absence. We need these riches, and we find them through breaking Bread and Bible together, and by doing Kingdom works with fellow members.

*'Jesus, renew our holy communion; teach us that our rest, our happiness, our peace depends upon it. Quicken our gathering together for and through Christ. Open our eyes to the glorious splendor of Your kingdom in the Church.'*



# Prayer and Fasting Guide

OCTOBER 22-26

## SATURDAY OCTOBER 22ND

It matters to God that we commit to one community, in the mundane, concrete, and ever-imperfect fellowship of believers. We cannot afford to wax eloquent about the mystical body when Jesus calls us to love the lot next to us with the off-key voice and weird political views. Who also happens to love Jesus. Jesus sweetly kills us through His unsexy body. Alleluia! He is the sole Head of the Church who makes us radiant members as we work out our salvation together, with disciples He chose without asking us.

*‘Thank You for exposing and burning off our categorizing, defensive, touchy selves through our faith communities. Good riddance; our lives depend on that death.’*

## SUNDAY OCTOBER 23RD

The Church dethrones each one of us at the feet of Jesus. Together, we honor Him above and beneath any personal distinction that may divide us. Pope Emeritus Benedict writes: “The Church of Jesus Christ is never *my* Church but always *His* church. Indeed, the essence of conversion lies precisely in the fact that I cease to pursue a party of my own that safeguards my interests and conforms to my tastes but that I put myself in His hands and become His, a member of His Body, the Church.”

*‘Help us, O God, to gather in humility and learn to see in every member a treasure of Your design and setting.’*

## MONDAY OCTOBER 24TH

Forging a local church life can be hard. Gratefully, we have help. Part of the privilege of being a church member is the continuity we share with all the saints. Faithful ones preceded us and made a way for our salvation. When snagged as we seek to be knit into the fabric of a church, we do well to remember faithful ones who too struggled to take their place and who forged a way of love for us to walk in unlovely seasons of church life. ‘The great cloud of witnesses’ (Heb. 12:1) surrounds us; they kept the faith and they can help us stay true as we recall their perseverance.

*‘We remember faithful faces who cheer us on. Thank you for persons who fought for our dignity as they ‘stood their ground in a great contest of suffering (Heb. 10:32).’ We have a trail because they blazed it. Thank You, God.’*

## TUESDAY OCTOBER 25TH

We first recall those whom we know at deeply personal levels who stood with and for us at formative stages of our faith. We know now that God used them mightily to accompany us through certain impasses en route to the next stage of our salvation. They fought for us, in prayer, in friendship, in providing

opportunities for us to grow; they treated us not as projects by people worthy of love and respect.

*‘Thank You God for all of these members \_\_\_\_\_ (recall as many as possible) who became a mosaic of You, the saints who revealed Your face and mine as Your beloved.’*

## WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 26TH

Problems and failures in the church are noisy. We must not allow them to bar us from gratitude for the saints who succeeded in love on our behalf. Their intercession signifies the humble nature of real service. These are not mega-church gurus but rather the little ones who prayerfully slayed our ‘goliaths’ so we could see God. Henri DeLubac writes: “The best Christians are not found among the wise and clever. What they say does not make the headlines; their lives are hidden from the public eye. Yet they are responsible, more than anyone else, for ensuring that our earth is not a hell on earth.”

*‘In quiet, we recall persons who trusted God for our return to Him. We thank You, O God, for the profound goodness of saints whose offerings quiet the din and drama of the powerful.’*



## Prayer and Fasting Guide

OCTOBER 27-31

*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

*Eph. 2:19-20*

### **T**HURSDAY OCTOBER 27TH

Roman Catholics take this another step by relying on the unseen 'Church' composed of all the faithful from the beginning who are under the headship of Jesus and worship Him in unison at this very moment. This Church Triumphant cheers us onward from heaven. When we are downcast, certain that our efforts to build up the church are in vain, we can be assured of help from heaven. Like a crosswind that defies the normal gravitational pull, saints' intercession raises us out of disappointment and sorrow. We fix our eyes on our heavenly home and with renewed vigor proceed to advance the Kingdom here.

*'Though we may not all share the same view of heaven's advocacy, we take heart that the momentum established by the 'great cloud' is ours too. We are not lean in our church efforts but rather lavish as we share holy courage with millions who have gone before us and now surround us.'*

### **F**RIDAY OCTOBER 28TH

A few examples of holy women in the Gospels may encourage us to become 'Church' through Jesus' faithful love. Only the Bridegroom can summon the Bride. Where better to start than the Samaritan woman in John 4? She like us is a mixture of holy and pagan tradition; she is proud and also broken, at a point in her life when kindness and truth from a holy man meant more than clinging to old securities. Accustomed only to the shame of a Jewish gaze, she beholds in Jesus the face of mercy; she looks straight at Him and becomes radiant, her face never to be covered with shame again (Ps. 34:5).

*'When we look at You Jesus, do we witness Your radiant love for us? Or do we avert Your gaze, in fear that we shall see disapproving eyes? Cleanse our sight. We believe that we are Your beloved; help our unbelief as we trust in You!'*

### **S**ATURDAY OCTOBER 29TH

We are divided, our hearts torn by many lovers. We see a host of factors that fed our adulteries but no matter. We stand condemned. We are the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-12), now surrounded by angry eyes and accusing voices, stones in hand, who insist we die for our compromised life. We look to You Jesus. You arise from writing in the sand and say: 'He who is without sin cast the first stone.' We cannot take our eyes off You. We hear stones fall to the ground and see eyes blazing with love for us as You turn and say: 'Neither do I condemn you; leave sin, cleave to Me. My love is better than mere lovers.' We look to You Jesus and become radiant, our faces no longer covered with shame.

*'Thank you for absorbing our shame and serving justice for our adulteries. There is none like You Jesus. Help our Church to convey the fullness of love that embraces and refines sinners like us.'*

## SUNDAY OCTOBER 30TH

Shame dies hard. As You woo us, drawing us to Yourself with cords of kindness, our hearts ache with gratitude. We cannot help but fall before You and worship You, washing Your feet with happy tears (Luke 7: 36-50). But the critical religious one is always there, judging us as hypocrites and tempting us to doubt our desire to give all to You. You remind us that ‘we who have been forgiven of much love You much’ (v. 47). We look past the ever-present Pharisee and see You, glorious in mercy. You absorb our shame that we might reflect Your radiance.

*‘May we never lose the wonder of Your mercy, especially when old religious faces tempt us to turn away from You. Keep us focused on You, Jesus, Mercy’s face. Prepare us to be a face of mercy for others.’*

## MONDAY OCTOBER 31ST

We are learning to see You. But our gaze at times is anxious, divided. We tend to do things for You rather than to draw from You. We are uncomfortable in the quiet. Help us to slow down long enough to know that You are enough. Calm the Martha in each of us; help us, like Mary of Bethany, to sit at Your feet and know that You are God, the One Thing that can never be taken from us (Luke 10:42).

*‘Slow us down when our heart races and we lose joy. Teach us once more to draw water joyfully from the well of Your salvation (Isa. 12:3), the ‘living water’ that satisfies our deepest need for love. Help us to well up and refresh others.’*



# Prayer and Fasting Guide

NOVEMBER 1 – 5

## TUESDAY NOVEMBER 1ST

Perhaps the most profound witness of the Church is Mary, Mother of God. She is the womb, as it were, of God’s saving initiative in Christ. Mary embodies what the Church can be. And it is she, the Church, who believes “what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!” (Luke 1:45).

Receiving that Word, the Church “bears” Christ by bringing forth numerous sons and daughters. What has Jesus called you to be and do on behalf of His Church? Can you welcome that Word as surely as Mary opened her being and became fruitful for God?

*‘We confess that tendency to do things in our own strength rather than to wait on the Word that grows and guides us. We want to bear fruit that remains. Grant us the courage of Mary whose granite faith believed Your promise.’*

## WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 2ND

Is it any wonder that Mary is synonymous with the Church? We can only grasp the Mystery of the Church through the witness of Mary. She is the mirror in which the whole Church is reflected, the Mother through whom we grasp the maternal heart of the Church. You could say that Mary is the antidote to an overly “masculinized” Church marked by frantic efforts to reinvent herself and yet never able to be still and know God. Before he became Pope Benedict, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger wrote: “Today, only the masculine principle counts. And that means doing, achieving results, actively planning and producing the world oneself, refusing to wait for anything upon which one would thereby become dependent, relying, rather, solely on one’s own abilities. It is, I believe, no coincidence, that we have increasingly separated Christ from His Mother.”

*‘Free us, God, to become the ground in which Your will can be done.’*

## THURSDAY NOVEMBER 3RD

Having invested in different expressions of ‘church’ and ‘church plants,’ I can attest to the Herculean efforts teams make to re-create Jesus for new seekers. Who is up to such a task? New songs, sermon series, services, leadership styles—all amplified by virtual wizards who cinematize every move. I am grateful for sensitivity to new ‘consumers’ but pandering to ever-changing tastes quickly devolves from loving one’s neighbor to losing the Gospel. We need the witness of Mary, and the grace to still our hearts and welcome His Word. Ratzinger, again: “We treat the Church almost like some technological device that we plan and make with enormous cleverness and expenditure of energy. . . . “You do much, but nothing comes of it!” (Hag. 1:6).

*‘Renew our listening hearts. “I am with you...My Spirit remains among you...Do not fear...I will fill this house with glory, and the present glory will surpass the former. And in this house I will grant peace” (Hag. 2:4-9).’*

## FRIDAY NOVEMBER 4TH

Mary teaches us to stay near to Jesus at every step of our life together. He is our Head, we His people, and no-other created being knows Him better than she does. Her witness frees us from striving to recreate the Church in our own image; rather, she models how to draw from Jesus as the source, the seed, and the sustainer of every good thing He wills for His Church. Benedict again: 'The Church is not a manufactured item; she is, rather, the living seed of God that must be allowed to grow and ripen. That is why the Church needs the Marian mystery; that is why the Church herself is a Marian mystery. There can be fruitfulness in the Church only when she has this character, when she becomes holy soil for the Word. We must retrieve the symbol of fruitful soil; we must once more become waiting, inwardly recollected people who in the depth of prayer, longing, and faith give the Word room to grow.'

*'Free us from strife in the Church; free us for You Jesus. We exist only because You do. We say 'yes' again; 'be it done to us according to Your will (Luke 1:38).'*

## SATURDAY NOVEMBER 5TH

Bearing Mary's heart for the Church is a deep and proper aim. And a costly one. Rather than steel oneself against the blows, the responsive heart feels wounds deeply. And nothing can wound the heart more deeply than the betrayal of His body. Mary empathizes with us; she felt profound suffering as she walked with Jesus over the course of His good hard life. Simeon prophesied these agonies to Mary: "a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:35). What represents these piercings more than wounds from devious churchmen? We may understand the wiles of pagans, but those of the "pious" pierce most deeply. They disorient us and can tempt us to mistrust the members of Christ, and at times, Christ Himself.

*'Show us any hardening of our hearts due to mistreatment and rejection by our fellow members. We confess any way that our defenses now tempt us to mistrust Your body, and in that way, to mistrust You. As You have shown us mercy, so we extend mercy to \_\_\_\_.'*



## Prayer and Fasting Guide

NOVEMBER 6-10

### SUNDAY NOVEMBER 6TH

Like Mary, our deepest wounds connect with our deepest loves; she loved Jesus more than any other. As we grow in love with Christ through His body, we too will experience an exquisite suffering tied to the failure of His members. I realized this years ago after an extended trial with my local church. Because I loved this church deeply, her failures cut me to the core! Love is what made me suffer for her truth until darkness was exposed and removed. Rejoice! We hurt because we love His bride. In this way, we can unite our sufferings with Christ. Pope Emeritus Benedict said: 'In the Church, God has put Himself into hands that betray Him again and again.' So we endure these betrayals of truth with Jesus, confident that we are being changed as we endure them in love.

*'Grant us grace and courage to know when the Church betrays You, Jesus. Help us to endure these betrayals with Your help, and to always seek to embody the truth which You have entrusted to her.'*

### MONDAY NOVEMBER 7TH

One of the keys we have discovered is the discipline of keeping church-wounds clean. Some of our assaults from 'beloved enemies' are continually provoked; if we are to battle for truth in a manner pleasing to God, we must do so with our wounds washed and set continuously by His mercy. In seasons of wounding and battle, I rush to the front rows of the Church and place myself under the healing flood of Christ Crucified. I bath and forgive daily. Only truth washed in mercy will prevail in a Church rocked by confusion and division.

*'Thank You Jesus for the ever-flowing river of mercy that rises in Your house. May we be the first to soak up 'living water' into our otherwise hard hearts. Thank You for keeping us tender through the gift of forgiveness.'*

### TUESDAY NOVEMBER 8TH

Any gift we give to the Church is a paltry payment for the love given freely to us. What do we have that we did not first receive (1 Cor. 4:7)? Yet we are weak and prone to defensiveness. We can thus admit any broken way in us that makes our offering hard to take. We are not yet seasoned lovers of the Church, especially toward members who

disagree with us. Jesus, lead on. Erasmus says: 'I put up with this Church in the hope that one day it will become better, just as she is constrained to put up with me in the hope that one day I will become better.'

*'Jesus, help us to get better. In the end, we shall be judged on love. So liberate the gifts You have given us with Your mercy. Oil our tongue with gratitude for the truths that have set us free.'*

## WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 9TH

Jesus helps us love the bride He loves most; He pours out mercy on us that we might extend mercy to His beautiful, broken Church. We are her! To hate the church is to hate ourselves, to live divided lives. There is no wholeness apart from His body. Our well-being depends on our union with her. Just as a Head without His body parts is incomplete, so are we, unless united with that Head along with our fellow members. May we be true to that often gangly 'temple', no matter how challenging. Our integrity depends on it.

*'Jesus, help us to be church-people without 'guile', undivided, child-like in faith of her goodness and champions for her best.'*

## THURSDAY NOVEMBER 10TH

Similarly, we seek to be chaste witnesses, undivided in our inner selves. The Catholic Catechism defines chastity as the unity of our spiritual commitment with our bodily longings for union with others (CCC #2337). No easy integration! Given the high value God places on sexual love (St. Paul compares marital intercourse with the self-giving love Jesus has for His Church in Eph. 5: 29-33!), we do well to draw upon every gift the Church offers to help us progress in chastity. I do not want to live a divided life: believing one thing and doing shamefully in secret what I despise. We cry out for all the mercy we need to live chastely.

*'Help us, O God. We are divided, You unite us through the graces of Your Bride. We need Your merciful members in order to become a Bride pleasing to You.'*

# Prayer and Fasting Guide

NOVEMBER 11-15

## FRIDAY NOVEMBER 11TH

We are also aware that in the area of chastity we wage a battle unforeseen in human history. Satan rages against the integrity of God's image of humanity; he seeks to divide weak members through a host of temptations that dehumanize everyone involved. Porn is now foundational in the imagination of young persons, as is fornication, divorce, and the strange 'justice' now accorded a range of gender identities, beginning with homosexuality. Who can stand? Only those who humble themselves before the Holy One and who learn to cry out for mercy from God's house to free the captives.

*'Make us a prayerful people, committed to growing in chastity and intercession for the chastity of our fellow members. Only those who battle in prayer will triumph; we wrestle against powers who shrink back only in His Name.'*

## SATURDAY NOVEMBER 12TH

My entry into ministry of any type in a new catholic parish was prayer. Our diocese was facing a huge crisis of sexual abuse (our bishop was the first in legal history to be indicted for mishandling a pedophile priest), so no-one wanted to touch ministry to the sexually broken. But my priests agreed to a prayer group. So we gathered on our knees to lift up our diocese and our parish. As we prayed, the waters began to rise in this temple as they did in Ezekiel 47: for the healing of many divided souls. The waters continued to rise, and we started a Living Waters group soon after.

*'Grant us a prayerful spirit and strategy for our churches, we pray, O God. May we undivided ones become chaste gifts to our churches. Would you begin to soak our temples with 'living water' as to make evident the mercy which sets us free?'*

## SUNDAY NOVEMBER 13TH

I believe that God is raising a global army of healing warriors on behalf of the Bride. Here we must mature. On the base of our child-like wonder and Mary-like responsiveness, we must hone a fighter's frame and skills with which to contend for the Church's chastity. I think of Nehemiah who instructed his team of workers (rebuilding the wall surrounding Jerusalem) to carry healing tools in one hand and in the other, weapons to ward off opposition (Neh. 4: 16-18). No-one in the New Testament represents that tender warrior better than Joseph. He epitomizes the 'salient father' (equal parts tenderness and strength) who fought for the dignity of his family and for God's saving purposes for all.

*'Father, we ask for a spirit of battle in the spirit of St. Joseph. We want to fight with tenderness and strength, innocence and wisdom. Show us through Your servant Joseph how to serve Your house well.'*



## M ONDAY NOVEMBER 14TH

Once again employing Mary as a 'type' of the Church, we can witness how Joseph exerted his strength to protect and honor Mary. Rather than suspect and shame his fiancé due to her unusual pregnancy, he planned to make every effort to guard her from public disgrace (Matt. 1:19). How many times have we heard people dismissing the Church due to some allegation, real or perceived? Have we stood in the gap for her, believing for and asserting her best? So must we champion the Church, even and especially when she stumbles.

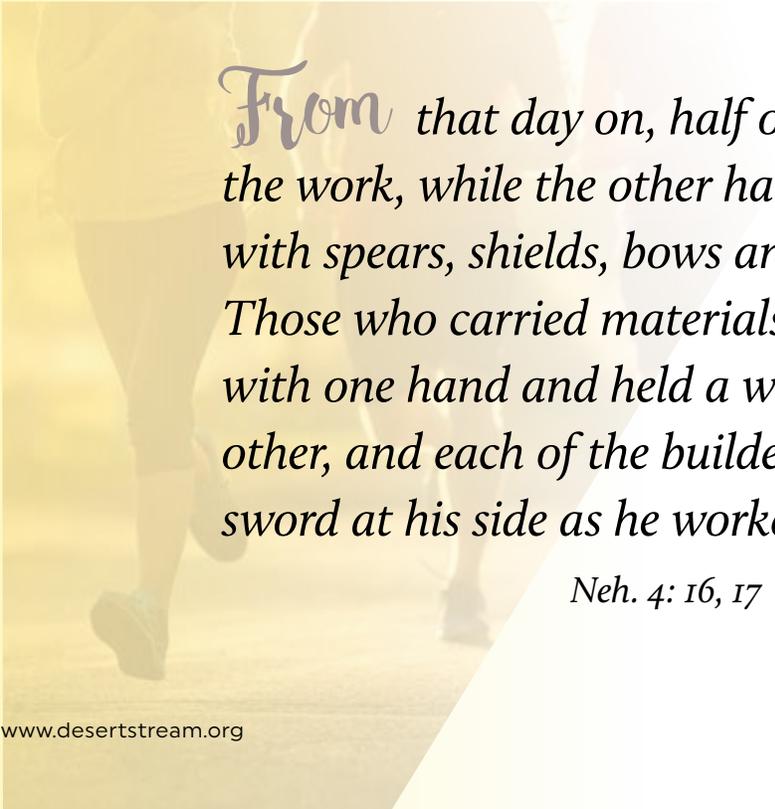
*'Instead of scoffing with the multitudes, teach us God in the spirit of St. Joseph to grieve over her uncovering and to do what we can to guard her dignity. No more trash talking the Church! You are dissing the members of Christ: me, and us!'*



## T UESDAY NOVEMBER 15TH

The night after Joseph prepared to defend Mary, God gave him a dream about what was really going in with his 'holy family' (Matt. 1: 20). He arose from that dream and did everything in his power to ensure the well-being of his vulnerable wife and child. So we too ask God: 'In what way would you have me do my part—however big or small—to ensure that the Church is a clean and powerful place for sinners like me?' Joseph secured in love a beautiful woman who became fruitful under his protection. May we too bring forth many chaste sons and daughters as we contend for a merciful, chaste Bride.

*'Stir up that masculine spirit that seeks to protect the vulnerable. May we behold the Church's beautiful capacity to make the unclean pure and the barren fruitful, and fight for both!'*



*From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor... Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked.*

*Neh. 4: 16, 17*



# Prayer and Fasting Guide

NOVEMBER 16-20

## WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 16TH

We don't know much about Joseph except that he was a carpenter/builder, and that he worked hard to further God's best for his family. Joseph was a worker. He anchored the mysteries entrusted to him with focused, practical action. So must we. It is not enough to pontificate about what the Church should or should not be. We can act, we can gather, we can pray with others; we can help build a Church that is chaste, washing one sinner at a time with 'living water.' Inspired doing beats the best ideas. Many pastors welcome good initiatives and will at least let us try to work out well-constructed plans.

*'Father, Your will be done for Your bride. Give me courage and consistency to do my part for her.'*

## THURSDAY NOVEMBER 17TH

In order for the Church to become radiant, she needs us who have exchanged rags for mercy's riches to embody those truths. A living radiant temple of transformation is far more compelling than a church that advocates for the sexually immoral on the basis of 'justice.' As the Church is the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), we who overcome sin in her courts become "pillars in the temple" (Rev. 3:12). We who stand against the disintegrating impact of sin stand for sinners and for the Church as a powerfully good place for sinners. Radiant, we 'pillars' make evident the truths that set captives free.

*'Grant us the grace to overcome our demons and so shine for sinners in Your house.'*

## FRIDAY NOVEMBER 18TH

The prophet Isaiah gives us a model of declaring the beauty of God's temple. It is at once a proclamation of her reflected glory and also of contending for more of her glory (Isa. 62: 1-7). Lit from within by the Holy God, we shine brighter as we embody chastity and bear witness of the beauty of man for woman and woman for man. Not reducing persons to sexual objects, we affirm the value of the person in every situation. That clear witness testifies to a greater goal—the consummation of Bride and Bridegroom. We are all heading toward the wedding feast of the Lamb. We rejoice with the prophet over the God who dwells with us, 'our land married, like a bridegroom rejoicing over His bride' (Isa. 62: 4, 5).

*'Help us to grasp Your spousal love for us, O God. We welcome You into our courts and ask for continued growth in becoming good chaste gifts for one another.'*

*Those who look  
to him are radiant;  
their faces are never  
covered with shame.*

*Ps. 34:5*

...for the  
Lord will take  
delight in  
you, and your  
land will be  
married. As  
a young man  
marries a  
young woman,  
so will your  
Builder marry  
you; as a  
bridegroom  
rejoices over  
his bride, so  
will your God  
rejoice over  
you.

*Isa. 62:4b-5*

## SATURDAY NOVEMBER 19TH

For generations-to-come, we leave a legacy of merciful clarity concerning what it means to be human, made in His image. For a people stripped of dignity and modesty in early childhood then subject to the normalizing of cohabitation, contraception, murdering the unborn, "gay marriage" and gay everything, we assert a witness of true beauty and creativity. St. Paul recognized the need for the body of Christ to be built up in her core truths; he witnessed and foresaw the reality that we as the church would be "like infants . . . blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:14). He urges us instead to speak the truth in love and so "grow up into him who is the Head" (v. 15). As His maturing children, we build up the body of Christ according to her clear message of chastity. The dignity of future generations depends on it.

*'Teach us how to speak the truth in love and so grow up into Jesus our Head. We want our lives to matter for the dignifying of all people. As the Church is the foundation of this truth, we assert what You, Jesus, have entrusted to her, to us.'*

## SUNDAY NOVEMBER 20TH

In our passion for the Church's 'righteousness to shine like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch' (Isa. 62:1), we remember spousal love. We live today as a people espoused to Jesus; that spiritual bond, mightier and more intimate than one shared with the most exquisite lover, guides and sustains our efforts to build up His bride. After all, He is the Bridegroom 'who gave Himself up for us by cleansing us and making us a radiant Church' (Eph. 5: 25-27). And He will be faithful to complete that work of preparing a people for Himself. 'Come, and I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb...and He showed me the Holy City coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its radiance was like that of a precious jewel, clear as crystal' (Rev. 21: 9-12).

*'Thank You for coming into our lives to dwell with us as wait for completion. Even so Lord, come.'*



### 2016 Fall Report

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**DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES  
PUBLISHES THE FOLLOWING:**  
Newsletter (Spring and Fall)  
Mid-Year Report (Summer)  
Year-End Report (Winter)

### Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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