

SR. MIRIAM JAMES HEIDLAND, SOLT  
ILLUSTRATED BY VALERIE DELGADO

# RESTORE

WEEK I DIGITAL DOWNLOAD



A GUIDED LENT  
JOURNAL FOR PRAYER  
AND MEDITATION



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# RESTORE

A GUIDED LENT  
JOURNAL FOR  
PRAYER AND  
MEDITATION

SR. MIRIAM JAMES  
HEIDLAND, SOLT

ILLUSTRATED BY VALERIE DELGADO

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# INTRODUCTION

BY HIS HOLY  
AND GLORIOUS WOUNDS,  
MAY CHRIST THE LORD  
GUARD US  
AND PROTECT US. AMEN.

## BLESSING OF THE FIRE AND PREPARATION OF THE CANDLE FROM THE EASTER VIGIL

The season of Lent stirs many things in our hearts. Some people love it, some people dislike it, and all of us know that we are supposed to somehow be transformed through it all. We often give up chocolate, alcohol, or meat. We try to practice mortification and remember that we are only pilgrims on this earth and that all things pass away. And while all these things are inherently good and important, I often wonder what is being engaged at the deeper level of our hearts.

Over and over again this season, we will be reminded of God's mercy, love, compassion, and protection. We will see love poured out and a heart pierced for our offenses. And over and over again, God will invite us to turn away from our sins and idols, and from fragmentation, darkness, death, and all the things that break us and lead us away from salvation.

Jesus is inviting us into his life—how he lives, thinks, and loves. He is showing us what it means to be truly alive and truly

human. He is inviting us into his heart so that he can reveal ours and bring us into communion.

The journey you are about to make is dangerous, for if you truly follow the Lord into the desert, you will never be the same. If you enter into this time with him from the heart, you will emerge with a heart that has been changed. Yours will be a heart that sees more deeply, is pierced more easily, loves more strongly, and lives more passionately. Jesus will be etched into the crevices of your being.

I invite you to not self-censor during these days as you read the reflections and answer the reflection questions. Be very honest. Jesus has much to tell you; you need only say yes.

We can try to go around, underneath, or over the Cross, but the life that we so desperately desire is on the other side, time and time again, little by little. The only way is through.

So let us rise and be on our way.

SR. MIRIAM JAMES HEIDLAND

## HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

The *Restore* Lenten journal's combination of daily meditations, questions for reflection, journaling space, prayers, and beautiful original art is specially designed to draw you into a deeper, richer experience of Lent. It prepares you not only to walk with Jesus to Calvary but also to go with him into the desert, to receive his healing mercy, to practice forgiveness, and to meet Jesus in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

### WHO IS RESTORE FOR?

*Restore* is for anyone who desires to experience the forty days of Lent as a healing journey that leads you to explore the crevices of your heart. The season of Lent is the ideal time to step back from your life and evaluate where you stand with God, yourself, and others. This Lenten journal provides a daily path to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as avenues for healing and restoration.

*Restore* is perfect for use in groups; in fact, it was designed with that in mind. There's something special about taking this Lenten journey with a community—whether that community is your entire parish, a small group, or your family. Visit [www.avemariapress.com/restore](http://www.avemariapress.com/restore) for more information about bulk discounts, a leader's guide, help with organizing a small group, videos from Sr. Miriam James Heidland discussing the theme for each week of Lent, and other resources to help you make the most of your time together with *Restore*.

You can also use *Restore* on your own, with the meditations and journaling prompts helping you draw nearer to God, hear his voice in new ways, and pour out your heart to him as you turn your attention daily to Jesus's journey to the Cross. You may find that this Lent, you're in special need of regular quiet times

of connection with God; *Restore* is an excellent way to help you find that space each day.

## HOW IS RESTORE ORGANIZED?

*Restore* is organized into four parts:

- ✦ In part 1, you'll focus on the idea of *prayer* as our primary way of connecting with God and healing your relationship with him. Everything in the spiritual life begins with prayer, so too does this journal.
- ✦ Part 2 leads you to reflect on *fasting* as an avenue for healing your relationships with yourself and your sin. The meditations in this part help you explore the roots of your sin and desires so that you can come to terms with your need for Jesus's healing mercy.
- ✦ In part 3, you'll focus on *almsgiving* as a practice that heals your relationships with others. The meditations in this part challenge you to reflect on how you can be a better companion to members in your family and community.
- ✦ Part 4—Holy Week—is a deep exploration of where your heart stands with God and how you can walk with him to Calvary, uniting your *sacrifices* with his. And then we rise with him on Easter Sunday, experiencing the fullness of all things.

Within each week, you'll encounter a simple daily pattern made up of the following parts:

- ✦ Each day opens with a *quotation* from a saint, a great teacher, scripture, or liturgical text in order to focus your thoughts on the key idea from the day's meditation.

- ❖ The *meditation* from Sr. Miriam James Heidland draws out a message from the liturgy, scripture, or the process of spiritual healing to help you experience the mercy and love of God this Lent.
- ❖ The *reflection* challenges you to ponder and journal in response to the meditation, helping you identify practical ways to live out the Lenten season more fully.
- ❖ Finally, after you've read and journaled, the closing *prayer* provides a starting point for your own requests and prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God.

## HOW SHOULD I READ RESTORE?

This Lenten journal's daily format is flexible enough to accommodate any reader's preferences: If you're a morning person, you may want to start your day with *Restore*, completing the entire day's reading, reflection, journaling, and prayer first thing in the morning. Or you may find that you prefer to end your day by using *Restore* to focus your attention on Christ as you begin to rest from the day's activities. You may even decide to read and pray as a family in the morning and journal individually in the evening.

The key is to find what works for you, ensuring that you have time to read carefully, ponder deeply, write honestly, and connect intimately with the Lord in prayer.

Whatever approach you choose (and whether you decide to experience *Restore* with a group or on your own), be sure to visit [www.avemariapress.com/restore](http://www.avemariapress.com/restore) for extra resources to help you get the most out of this special Lenten journey.

PART I  
**PRAYER**

**HEALING OUR  
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH GOD**

FOR ME, PRAYER IS A SURGE OF  
THE HEART; IT IS A SIMPLE LOOK  
TURNED TOWARD HEAVEN, IT IS  
A CRY OF RECOGNITION AND OF  
LOVE, EMBRACING BOTH TRIAL  
AND JOY.

**ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX**

WEEK OF ASH  
WEDNESDAY





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## WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY

### ASH WEDNESDAY

BUT YOU ARE MERCIFUL TO ALL,  
FOR YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS,  
AND YOU OVERLOOK MEN'S  
SINS, THAT THEY MAY REPENT.  
. . . YOU SPARE ALL THINGS, FOR  
THEY ARE YOURS, O LORD WHO  
LOVE THE LIVING.

WISDOM 11:23, 26

## THE INNER ROOM

Here we begin, dear friends. Ash Wednesday. Our foreheads are marked with the blackness of death while the words “Repent and believe in the gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” are spoken over us. Every single person, no matter their age or state in life, receives the same greeting, for we all are called to repent, believe, and remember. All things pass away and only the eternal remains.

We receive glimpses of this reality throughout our lives, but today we ponder it specifically as the door through which we follow Jesus out into the desert. The *Catechism* states that “interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed” (CCC 1431). We must turn away from what wounds us, destroys us, and makes us sick and turn toward God who heals us, saves us, and makes us whole.

While other people may know certain things about us, and we may know ourselves to varying degrees, only the Lord knows us fully. He alone sees us in our fullness and wholeness and loves us completely. This is why we must go into the “inner room” with him, into the hidden place, so all can be revealed.

He is inviting us into an encounter with him, in the depths of our hearts, for that is where true transformation takes place.





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WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY  
**THURSDAY**

PROMPT OUR ACTIONS WITH  
YOUR INSPIRATION, WE PRAY,  
O LORD,  
AND FURTHER THEM WITH  
YOUR CONSTANT HELP,  
THAT ALL WE DO MAY ALWAYS  
BEGIN FROM YOU  
AND BY YOU BE BROUGHT TO  
COMPLETION.

**COLLECT FOR MASS OF THE DAY**

## THE SCHOOL OF LOVE

Perhaps by now you have noticed some areas of your life that need attention this Lent. When you look at the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, you may have chosen a few practices for each discipline that will help bring you into deeper freedom during this season. And that is what the disciplines are supposed to do—bring us into communion with God, ourselves, and others. As sin scatters and fragments, love brings us into communion and wholeness.

The roots of the words *discipline* and *disciple* are similar in meaning—student, training, learning. We are learning how love and the school of love never end.

During Lent, the Lord is calling us to something very intimate—far beyond the mere surface of “praying more” or “giving up dessert.” He is calling us into union with him in the heart. This is why we must allow the Lord to prompt our actions with his inspiration and further them with his help. We are not making the journey of Lent on our own or from our own will. We are being led by the Lord as the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the desert.





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WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY  
FRIDAY

HEAR, O LORD, AND BE GRACIOUS  
TO ME! O LORD, BE MY HELPER.

PSALM 30:10

## YOUR HEART WITH JESUS

Thousands of books have been written on prayer, but I would like to offer the guiding quote from St. Thérèse (on the part I title page) for your heart during this time. For that is what it is. This is a journey about your heart with Jesus and your relationship with him. Each person's relationship with Christ is unique and unrepeatable. As God loves each of us in a way he loves no other person, so too we love God in a way that no one else loves God. The shape of our heart is precious to him; he knows the distinct contours that belong to us alone.

No one can ever exhaust prayer for it is a direct encounter with the eternal, endless, indescribably beautiful God. It is the simple act of two hearts coming together—listening, sharing, receiving, responding, being, loving. Prayer heals our relationship with God. Where we are shattered by sin and disorder, prayer draws us into the heart of God.

Prayer happens in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, in activity and in silence, without ceasing.

This relationship of covenant and communion is initiated by God. Our response is just that—a response to the One who invites us and draws us. God is interested in what matters the most. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reveals, “Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. . . . It is the *heart* that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of the prayer are in vain” (CCC 2562).

There are so many beautiful and rich ways to pray, and we need them all, but it is our heart that needs to pray the most.





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WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY  
**SATURDAY**

ANSWER ME, O LORD, FOR  
YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE IS  
GOOD; ACCORDING TO YOUR  
ABUNDANT COMPASSION, TURN  
TO ME.

PSALM 69:16

## THE LORD'S TENDER MERCY

As the Lord leads us into these first few days of Lent, you may already be noticing a few things in your life. You may have had a deeper revelation of an aspect of God's love for you. You may already be tired of your Lenten practices, or you may have concluded that a lot of things need to change (and quickly!) and you cannot possibly do this on your own. These are the very places we must go with Jesus. But how are we to do so?

We often hear the word *mercy*, but the true meaning of the word easily passes us by. Our English use of the word *mercy* is derived from the Latin word *miser cordia*, with *miseriae* denoting "misery" and *cor* denoting "heart." Or more succinctly, the heart of God enters into our misery. God enters into the true misery of our sin, sorrow, and suffering, and he saves us, restores us, and redeems us.

He does not do this theoretically or from a distance. He does this incarnationally and personally through the person of Jesus Christ. He became one of us. God coming to us as a man changes everything—absolutely everything. Jesus comes in littleness, simplicity, poverty, and nakedness. He comes in strength, truth, power, and wisdom. The heart of God became man, a man like us in all things but sin. And still he takes on our sin to save us.

He lived. He suffered. He died. He rose. He holds nothing back. And he shares his life with us.

I am often overwhelmed by the beauty of Jesus Christ. His heart is for our misery and the restoration therein.





FIRST WEEK  
OF LENT  
**THE DESERT**





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT  
SUNDAY

NO ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM  
WILL BE PUT TO SHAME.

ROMANS 10:11

## LAY ALL THINGS BARE

On this first Sunday of Lent, we are led by the Spirit into the desert with Jesus. The desert is a forbidding place. Replete with scarcity, dryness, and dangerous wildlife. We often find ourselves recoiling from the invitation to follow Jesus into these places.

The beautiful thing about the desert, though, is that it lays all things bare and Christ goes before us. We do not go into the desert alone, and the Lord will not reveal anything to us that he does not also wish to attend to and heal.

In the desert, things become very clear. We see our idols—the things we grasp at for salvation other than God. We see where we hide behind our fig leaves of self-righteousness and shame. We see where our sin has wreaked havoc in our lives and in the lives of others.

We also see Jesus's immense love for us right there in those very places. Jesus Christ is led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to suffer every temptation we will ever face and to emerge victorious. Jesus Christ is Spirit who does not fail.

Sorely afflicted, he remains faithful. Sorely afflicted, he knows our hearts. Sorely afflicted, he draws close to us with his love to save us.

The desert is within our hearts. It is the most important and difficult journey that we will ever continually make.





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT  
MONDAY

BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPT-  
ABLE TIME; BEHOLD, NOW IS  
THE DAY OF SALVATION.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

## TAKE HIM AS YOUR GUIDE

We have all had the experience of knowing that we need to do something about a situation and yet putting it off until another day. It's incredible to witness the lengths to which we will go in order to procrastinate or deflect, somehow hoping the situation will diffuse itself or that we won't have to face it!

Certainly there is a time for all things, and fear and compulsion are not ideal motives for change, but I believe we all have places deep within our hearts where the Lord is saying to us, "It's time now. Let's look at these things together. I am with you. You are never alone. It is time to allow these places to surface so you can be well."

Perhaps even reading those words triggers anxiety in your heart or tension in your stomach. Jesus is with you. He leads you into these places, little by little. This is why prayer and encounter from the heart is so important.

When people love each other, they can talk about anything. It may not be easy, and it may take time, but the truth can come out and be seen and experienced by the witness of love. It is the bond of authentic and everlasting love (covenant) that allows for the freedom for everything to come out upon the altar of our hearts with God. Jesus will not reject us.

Today, as you read this, is a very acceptable time.





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT  
TUESDAY

LORD, YOU HAVE BEEN OUR  
DWELLING PLACE IN ALL  
GENERATIONS.

PSALM 90:1

## TRUST IN HIS FAITHFULNESS

Trust is an interesting reality. It's hard to earn, easy to lose, and something that we hold very dear. It is one thing to say that we trust someone, and it is an entirely different thing to actually trust them and to allow our heart to rest more deeply in that other person.

To trust someone is to rely on the integrity, ability, or strength of a person. It is to have confidence (*con* means “with,” *fide* means “faith”) in a person that they are who they say they are. It is to rely upon a person with the hope that they will be faithful to their promises and their word.

When we rely upon someone, it is like we put our “weight” upon them and release the need to control, grasp, manipulate, or self-protect. We are opening our heart and life in vulnerability (able to be wounded) and allowing another close to us, entrusting to them what matters the most to us. And this is why it is so scary to us. This is why when someone breaks our trust, often our first instinct is to make an inner vow of “I will never trust anyone again. I will never allow myself to be hurt again by being vulnerable.” (We will reflect more on this in the coming weeks.)

Because the Lord knows how difficult it is for our broken humanity to trust and be trusted, he continually reveals to us over and over again who he truly is. From the beginning to the end of scripture is an unbroken revelation of who God is and, because of him, who we are.

God is faithful. Over and over again, he is faithful.





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT

WEDNESDAY

RETURN TO THE LORD, YOUR  
GOD, FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND  
MERCIFUL.

JOEL 2:13

## A COVENANT OF ETERNAL LOVE

In this past week, I have used the word *covenant* here and there, but today I would like to mention it specifically because it is the foundation upon which we rest and to which we continually return. If we allow the reality of covenant to inform our entire lives—mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and sexually—we will live differently, for we will live in the truth of who we are.

God does not sign a contract with us. He makes a covenant with us. In very simple terms, a contract is an agreement of an exchange of goods, whereas a covenant is a pledge of an exchange of people—and the people who make the covenant do not give other people, but themselves and their descendants. A covenant says, “I am yours and you are mine.” And with God it says, “I am yours and you are mine. Forever.”

A covenant says, “I love you. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am not going anywhere. I am here for you. No matter what happens, I will not reject you. I love you as you are, and I desire your ultimate good. I give myself to you completely and I receive you completely. You do not have to hide anything. You do not have to pretend. You can bring anything to me and I will be with you in it, bear it with you, and speak the truth to you about it in love.” This is how God loves us. This is the freedom and responsibility of love.

We ache for this kind of love because this is the love in which we are made. We know this echo within our hearts, even if our tangible experiences of human love have been something much less (and we have all had these painful experiences). This covenant love is the pledge God makes to us, and he is the only one who can perfectly fulfill it.

He is yours and you are his.





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT  
**THURSDAY**

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART,  
O GOD . . . RESTORE TO ME THE  
JOY OF YOUR SALVATION.

**PSALM 51:10, 12**

## THE CAPTIVATING LOVE OF GOD

The covenant God makes with us is true and everlasting. It is not just a nice idea or a pious thought but an eternal reality that impacts us at every moment. For those of us who are baptized, this covenant is indelibly marked upon our souls. The covenant of the Sacrament of Baptism configures us to Christ; we belong to him. Jesus brings us into the same relationship that he has with the Father.

This truth roots us and grounds us in eternal love. This truth changes everything. It means that we are eternally marked as belonging to God as his beloved sons and daughters, and that he delights in us. It means that no matter what other people do to us or say to us, nothing can change this eternal reality of being eternally loved. It means we can have the subjective experiences of being betrayed, abused, abandoned, or rejected and feel the deep suffering of those experiences and still rest in the deepest reality that even if others leave us or forsake us, God never will. It means that whatever is happening in our lives right now is not the end of the story.

Even now as I write these words, the captivating love of God is so stunning to me. And this is why prayer is so foundational. Prayer heals our relationship with God, not on his end but ours.

Prayer is not mere words; prayer is life itself. This is why we pray without ceasing.





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT  
FRIDAY

HAVE I ANY PLEASURE IN THE  
DEATH OF THE WICKED, SAYS  
THE LORD GOD, AND NOT  
RATHER THAT HE SHOULD TURN  
FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE?

**EZEKIEL 18:23**

## OUR RESPONSE TO HIS LOVE

As Adam and Eve are shattered in the garden by their decision to listen to the enemy and not to rely upon the truth of who God is, so are we. We hold God in suspicion, we blame him, we try to create our own reality apart from him, and we fear being seen by him. We fear being seen by the only one who can actually do anything to heal us.

God's response is to willingly suffer the effects of our choices, give us his very heart, and invite us into a covenant of love. The humility of God is staggering. How exquisite he is.

All caring relationships are built upon time and hearts shared together. We make time for those whom we love; what matters to them, matters to us. We care for them, and they for us. It is not always easy or fun, but we continue to go forward through it all.

When we spend time with God in prayer listening, receiving, speaking, pondering, and responding, our lives are changed. As we drink deeply from the scriptures and let this living Word settle into the marrow of our souls, the poison of sin and lies is drawn out. As we meditate and contemplate upon who God is and engage in conversation with him, our stony hearts are softened and made new. As we confess our sin and weaknesses and ask for his heart to meet us in our misery, new light dawns.





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FIRST WEEK OF LENT  
SATURDAY

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO KEEP  
HIS TESTIMONIES, WHO SEEK  
HIM WITH THEIR WHOLE HEART.

PSALM 119:2

## LENT AS A HEALING JOURNEY

We have spent a lot of time this past week and a half pondering who God is and what prayer, covenant, our heart, and love mean to us. This is on purpose. These truths will be the foundation upon which we will continue to build and, as we read earlier, continually return. The foundation matters the most.

A house may look lovely on the exterior, but if the foundation is flawed, the house will develop acute problems. We see this in our own lives: The Lord spends much time healing and restoring the roots of our lives. This happens little by little over time. Yes, we experience deep shifts and major breakthroughs within that are seismic and felt and lasting. And we also have tiny reverberations of the tender work of the Artist who knows exactly what he is creating.

Lent is a healing journey. Perhaps that is why Lent is so difficult at times. I often liken the human heart to a diamond: a diamond brilliantly sparkles in the light as the facets refract the light, and the human heart has many facets. We are not “all or nothing” but a mix of so many things.

Perhaps during these days you have already experienced the Lord illumining a facet of your heart, and you are saying to him, “This again!? I have already looked at this so many times.” Yet there it is. As I see this happen many times in my own heart, I truly believe that this is God’s way of integrating all the facets of our heart. God loves us so much that he will tirelessly visit every facet of our being to bring us into communion. He so gently and reverently comes to every fiber of our being that is isolated and fragmented to bring us into communion with him. He is the physician we have need of.



