

Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, for I am gracious and merciful.

Joel 2:12-13

They sat quietly by a sunlit window. “I have forgotten how to have fun,” Anne said, gazing wistfully toward the wintering trees.

Her friend knew the statement to be true and did not argue. Recently retired, Anne had managed a heavy career by rigorously systematizing her life. She was dependable and predictable—like a trusted clock. But somehow, her joy had been caught in the gears.

Sometimes, change is as simple as confronting unexamined routines. At other times, it requires a profound turning. In this week’s readings, we hear the language of such radical transformation (*be reconciled, be holy, ask, repent, forgive*), words commanding a ruthless examination of our attitudes. They suggest that, in order to renew our hearts, we must let something in us die.

Paul begins the week reminding us that our sinful world is redeemable through the gracious gift of Jesus Christ. Believing this, we will have the courage for true transformation. Such faith frees us of our blindness to the unholy in our lives.

Throughout the week, Esther, Jonah, the God of Moses, and Jesus himself encourage us. We make this Lenten journey in the company of Holy Ones who radicalized their lives in faith, awareness, action and joy.

Unless, like Anne, we discover some discomfort in our souls, we will not seek change. Such discovery requires that we pray at the windows of our souls. Have we forgotten the spring-like beauty of a life lived deeply in God? Have we never known it in the first place? This week, we are invited to return to joy, or maybe to find it for the first time!