

*Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart.
Joel 2:12*

She had arranged to visit with an old college friend. They had been separated too long by the distancing choices that life often demands. She wanted to reconnect to that rare experience of shared transparency found just once or twice in a lifetime – the gift of a real friend.

They sat on a porch overlooking a gentle pond. The day was bright, the coffee hot, the chairs comfortable. But the magic was gone. Only half her friend had arrived for the cherished conversation. The other half – joy, adventure and the excess of youthful hope – had been lost. Somewhere in the intervening years, her friend had suffered a wound she did not share. This one afternoon would be too short a time to give that wound a name.

The ministry of healing requires time, whether it is to our own soul or to another's that we bring the sweet ointment of restoration. It requires the quiet listening of a loving spirit. It requires the honest naming of wounds and the ardent desire to be made new.

As we begin our Lenten experience, God is waiting to receive us. He already knows the wounds we will bring to the conversation. He already sees where our heart's light has dimmed. He holds our half-heartedness next to his own heart and yearns to heal us.

Can we hear God's unique invitation to us in this Lenten season? Can we confidently expose to his gaze the depth of our need for grace and transformation? Can we journey with Christ, through his passion and death, to the wholeness we are called to?