

AT S9 E11 Lent Part 4

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Hello and welcome to the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sister Miriam James Heidland and every week I'm joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. This podcast is born out of our friendship and all that the Lord is doing in our lives. You hear us laugh. You hear us cry. You hear us share very vulnerably, and you hear us talk about the things that we're still learning along the way. And you're most welcome to join us. You can find out all of our information on our podcast episodes on abidingtogether,podcast.com, but for now, grab a cup of coffee, settle in and welcome home.

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together Podcast and we are already on ladies - part four. part four of our Lenten series. How did it, how did it come to this? I don't really even know, but

Heather Khym: I can't believe it. It's just like whipping by, it feels like.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: It is whipping by. And so you're most welcome to join us. Uh, jump right in with us. We're going to talk about a lot of really beautiful things today. As usual, we've already had a very long conversation before we started recording this episode.

Michelle Benzinger: I wonder if our listeners get tired of us saying that 'we've already been on for a really long time but' now.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: I know I know, they're like enough already tell us what you're talking about.

Michelle Benzinger: Hey, we are living the abiding people. We are just living the abiding, but we are excited.

Heather Khym: It's cause we're still savoring these moments because they're not actually that often that we get to really do a deep dive into things. So when we do it's like, we just want to hang on to it a little longer.

Michelle Benzinger: We do. It's all good. It's all good. And it is still Lent people. We are still in Lent and it has felt very Lent-ish has it not?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: As it always does. Yeah.

Heather Khym: Yes it has.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. 2020 and 2021, the year of the Lent. But anyway,

Heather Khym: I'm getting more bratty with my Lenten times of fasting. I mean, before I used to be like all in like the bigger, the better, the harder, the better, like now I'm like standing in my pantry going, I hate intermittent fasting. And I'm not even talking to anybody in particular, I just want anyone around me to know. I'm bratty what can I say?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: it's like all of our hashtag first world problems? You're like, ah, geez.

Heather Khym: I know. I know. And then you feel like such a baby I'm like so miserable at this.

Michelle Benzinger: It is. and I don't know what it is about me though, every Lent it is like the Chick-fil-A thing. Like now I crave it on Fridays *and* Sundays. The days that I cannot have it. It's like something that I know, like, you can't have it

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Always want what you can't have.

Michelle Benzinger: Seriously! Can't always get what you want, you know, but Hey, there you go. So first world problems.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: I would love to know the psychology of that of like always wanting what you can't have and why things that you give up on as concerted things become so incredibly attractive. Like there's gotta be, I know there's a spiritual thing, but there's gotta be like a psychological thing about that.

Heather Khym: I don't know.

Michelle Benzinger: I agree.

Heather Khym: I've never wanted bread more and now that I've given up gluten, I'm like, even when I don't want it, I kind of still want it.

Michelle Benzinger: Hey, the struggle is real. The struggle is real. Oh yeah. I love it. And I think actually Claire used the quote in this book is like, just make sure your mortification isn't mortifying others. Like what's, you're giving up.

Heather Khym: Yeah. No doubt.

Michelle Benzinger: I could totally feel that right now. So yes, but

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Don't be Lent to other people.

Michelle Benzinger: Don't be Lent. Yes. There you go.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Put that on a t-shirt

Michelle Benzinger: Seriously. Here you go. But anyway. Okay. Let's dive in.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: I'm just so lenten right now. Alright dear friends as well. We digress, but let's dive in. So we're going to talk about chapters 20 all the way to 25. Okay. So there's a lot in these. I just want to say

Heather Khym: 26.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: 26. Okay. There's a lot in this. And we were just, we were talking about this before we started recording. And so we just want to say on the outset, and I was thinking about this when I was reading. Is that this for me and for, I think some of us who have just been journeying in certain spiritualities for awhile. This is what Claire is talking about here in her introduction to some of the concepts from Elizabeth of the Trinity - it's common knowledge. But I think for a lot of us, like hearing this maybe for the first time, it just, we're not really used to some of the words you used or used to some of even talking

about consolation or bride hip or, you know, just a rule of life and people are like what? So we just want to say that wherever you find yourself you're most welcome and just these concepts and these realities will grow on you over time. So if you don't understand, that's okay. We're just going to have you just continue to, just to dive in and to press in and it'll make sense to you I think as you kind of receive that more deeply and kind of sit with it more deeply. You might be like, Oh, that makes sense. So if it's not second language to you. It's totally fine. It's totally fine. We're always learning more. Anything the two of you want to say about that before we jump into the content?

Heather Khym: Yeah. I think part of our hope is that as we talk about it, even if you haven't read the book, that the topics that we talk about are relevant, not just for Carmelites. Like, it's not just for nuns, but no matter where you are, no matter what stage of life, all of these things actually apply in a very deep manner. And so I hope that through our sharing. And through some of our personal insights of how they apply to us, that you'll be able to see how they apply in your own life as well.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And I was thinking when I was preparing for us to record these episodes and going back and rereading things, you know, the chapters are short, but they're packed full of stuff. And so just really lean into the Holy Spirit. And what is he highlighting to you? What themes, what parts? Like there's so much that you could go on, even in the section that we're talking about now. Like we could stay in on rule of life for many topics, we could stay into consolation and desolation for many topics. We could stay in brideship. Like these are deep, deep themes that Claire brings up and she does a beautiful job of making them accessible to us. Just to even enter into this. But really lean into the Holy Spirit and say, Holy Spirit, what do you want to highlight to me? What do I need to take away from this? Where are you stirring in my heart in this time? And allow him to really make it concise for you personally. And because your journey is different, you know, everyone's is different. Even how the book speaks to Heather, Sister, and I, each one is different, you know, so just enter in it that way.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: That's great. Yeah, thanks y'all. Those are great insights. So we're going to pull our kind of, our guiding quote for this episode from page 102, if you have the book. Uh, it's page 102. And it is the quote from Archbishop Fulton Sheen. And he says, this, this is from his book, *The World's First Love*. He says, "The more precious the love, the more precautions to guard against it. The grating in a Carmelite monastery is not to keep the sisters in, but to keep the world out." And there's something about that one. I love just the reality of love. And it's very true. When you think of the things in your life that you love the most, don't you have special precautions to guard those things. Those things are especially precious, whether it's monetarily or emotionally, or spiritually, or physically precious to us, we by nature do that. We will make sure that those things are taken care of in a very special manner, and that they're preserved at all costs against any sort of decay or theft or any sort of destruction. So that makes a lot of sense. And then he talks about the grating in the Carmelite monastery. If you go to a Carmelite monastery, many times you can't see the sisters there, they're cloistered. And they're cloistered as a gift to the world. They're cloistered because they're given to Christ himself as a gift, as a foreshadowing of all of us, belonging to God, all in all. And they pour out their lives for the whole world, through their devotion, through their commitment, to their covenant, with Jesus Christ, for a blessing for the world. And so I love what he's saying. Sometimes people look at that and they're like, Oh my gosh, it'd be so stifling. And so suffocating. And I can't believe they don't leave their

convent ever. And it is a special call. It's a call within a call really. But it's not to keep them in-like they're climbing the walls to get out. It's to keep the world out so that their love remains undiluted and pure and efficacious and fruitful. And when I read that. And I would love to hear your thoughts, um, ladies, but for me, I was like, that's really, for all of us. This, this is the inner cloister. And the grating, so to speak, or the precaution or the mantle that Jesus places around our heart is not to keep us stuck in a place or suffocating just with the Lord. It's to keep the world out so that our hearts become more purified to receive his love and to love him purely. And this is the bridal chamber. This is the song of songs. This is, this is heaven. This is heaven. And so just as we kind of, and from there, you see Claire talk about in the subsequent chapters of consolation and desolation and to be a bride, but all of that is going to flow from the inner cloister, from where you and Jesus reside and from where that love, which is a place that's only for you and the Lord, flowers and blooms. Where he has those discussions with us, where he brings us into communion with him in every way. So, um, maybe Heather as you read that quote and kind of, as we journey here today, what are some thoughts that come to you?

Heather Khym: Yeah. Honestly, when I was reading about Claire's experience of going in to pray in the chapel and she was like, what tradition are we tiptoeing into and all of that. Like it made me remember when I went for a visit down to Nashville to visit my husband's family down there, we went to see the Nashville Dominican's. And In that time prior, I had really been struggling, you know, with my experience of like local parish. And like, there was just so many hard things and like church scandal and it just seemed like I was, I couldn't find what I loved. Like what was so important to me, like what was so special to me, it seemed to be fading like about the church. I was just going through this, like, you know, really like deep dark sort of, part of my journey there. And it's like, the beauty had been overshadowed by too much humanness. And so, and that was all that was kind of on my mind. But when I went to the Nashville Dominican's something so unexpected happened. I just like, we drove onto their grounds and I got out of the car and I almost started crying right away. And I was like, what is happening? Like what? And I knew that the Lord was present and I was like, all of a sudden, very attentive, like, God, what are you, what are you doing here? Like what is happening? And we went inside. And as we walked through the halls, it was supposed to be like a short visit. We had to be there for like four hours as they like showed us everything and played music for us and brought us to their chapel. And like our kids played basketball with the sisters. Like, it was just so amazing. But as I walked through the halls, it was like, the smell, the sense of prayer that was so deep and rich of like so many years, so many prayers poured out within those walls. Like the smell of the concrete. I don't know how to describe it, but all of a sudden, I just had this overwhelming sense of like, this is what I've been homesick for. This is, this represents everything that has been overshadowed by like humanness and I reconnected to the sacred and to the beauty and to really the Lord's presence, like in a very deep way as he is represented in the church. And so for me, like, as we talk about like keeping the world out, like there's certain things that I think the world attacks and can overshadow and almost distort the image of. And so to have these places where we regain like sensitivity and openness to the beauty of what is there like that, that experience for me was transformative. And I came back not just with like a renewed love for the church, but like a renewed love for the Lord. Like this sacred space within, and also within the human dynamics of the church building, it was revealed again. There was something that got protected again. So yeah, that's what it made me think of. And I think there are those places within that we have to be very careful about. Like, I think about my

marriage. I do a lot of things to protect my marriage. What about my relationship with God, which is the primary relationship in my life? I don't know. Michelle what are some of your thoughts?

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah, I totally agree with you Heather. and I had a very similar experience a year and a half ago. No, two years. I don't know. COVID time. I can't keep all the years straight. And so, but I went and gave a retreat at the visitation monastery in Mobile. And that is a cloistered order where they are behind the grail. I mean the grate. But when you go to the main church, first of all, if you're ever in Mobile and get a chance to see that, uh, convent it is stunning. It is a replica of France. They built it in late 1800s, and it looks like you walk into this like little European Oasis and

Heather Khym: Yeah even your photos were dreamy. It was like, wow.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah, I'll post some of the photos here. I still have them on my phone, but also it was very similar to Heather like when you drove on the property, I was like, what is this? and the only, uh, Sister that could speak was the head mother there, she was the only one to speak, everyone else was cloistered and did not speak. And when she greeted me, I said, Sister, what is that feeling? That I, when I came on here, I was like, it is like, this place is saturated in prayer. And she looked at me and started laughing. She's like, well, honey, we've been praying nonstop since late 1800s here.

Heather Khym: She's like, this is no joke, but it's like those thin places that we talked about in the last episode, it's thin places.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes it is totally thin places. And I think for that, it was interesting. So I was giving a retreat that weekend to laity women on the four women doctors of the church. So I'm giving it in the church. I'm standing in front of, you know, the altar right there, but behind the altar is like a plexiglass and like, uh, cloistered sisters were in there so I could see them and they were watching me. And I was just like, the whole visual image was just so stunning because it was like that veil. And you could see, but it was so interesting when I was doing the retreat and praying through it. I had just finished the part on St. Teresa of Avila, and I was talking about interior castles and the level of prayer. And there's a part in it. When you go into interior castles, they say like level, they're seven mansions in interior castles, but there's a saying that most people stop at the third mansion and never go further. And when I read that line, I was just so heartbroken because I'm sitting in there in this place saturated in prayer. And it was just like this grieving in me and this makes me tear up, but I was like, I'm so sorry, Lord. It was just this grieving. Like we don't come closer. The majority of us don't come closer and it was almost that like inspiration inside of me, like the Holy Spirit inside of me. Like I want to teach women, all women. It is not just a cloistered nun. It is laity. And I think that's the beauty of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. She was prophetic before her time saying that the universal call to holiness is not just for priests and religious. It is for all. And that a single woman and a woman with a lot of children and whoever you are and whatever state you are first, your vocation is first and foremost to love. And second, your vocation is, you know, you have an inner cloister within you. And one of the ways that we even teach the young girls that we have here, how to pray is I always have them use Ignatian imagination. I want you to think, what does your secret place look like? What does your secret garden look like in song of songs? Like, especially like in song of songs 4 - calls it, says it is the enclosed garden. What does it look like? Picture it, see it. And so when you can visualize it in your

mind, okay. This is where I want to meet Jesus. What does it look like? This is what the flowers, what does it smell like? How does Jesus come to me in that? What does he look like? How does he look when he looks at me? Like these are beautiful things. So you can go there in prayer, you can go there in your mind, and then you can see that your heart just opens that you have a special place that's individually created just for you to meet the lover of your soul. And I just want to also tell our listeners wherever you are on the journey that doesn't, it's a journey and it doesn't come naturally. Like I've been walking with the Lord for a long time and it wasn't til like a year and a half ago or two years in my personal retreat. I'm like, Oh, I have intimacy issues with the Lord. I don't let him get close. And I'm like, hello people. Like I looked, Sister was there, but I was on my personal retreat. I'm like, could you not have told me before? And she's like, well, I don't know. It's you and the Lord, you know. It was, but I think as a beautiful, I had such a strong relationship with the father and the Holy spirit, But there were some kind of block with Jesus because there was an intimacy thing that I had. A part of my heart needed to be unlocked by him. And so this is a journey friends, and, you know, to really discover our inner cloister place and to discover him in a new way, in the secret garden with us.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Oh gosh. Yes. What both you're saying is just so true and beautiful. And the truth of. I just love what Claire has done here. I love that Claire has taken the life of a Carmelite and made it accessible to everybody. No matter what state of life you're in, like all of it, like you're both are saying. All of us as we read it, it speaks different things to each one of us. And I think that I was just talking to a religious sister the other day. And I think in religious life, sometimes what we do is we're all about formation of women. And, but I think sometimes what happens is there's this unspoken kind of pressure put on, say a woman who's about to make her first vows. That, um, somehow she has to be perfect and somehow it's like, Oh, you're going to make your first vows. And I was just, I was thinking to myself, why would you ever put that pressure? And I'm just saying, it's like, sometimes it's like this underlying thing of like, okay, there's a pressure felt by the woman, like, okay, I'm making my first vows. I'm going to give my life to Jesus and it has to be perfect. And I was like, you know, when a husband and a wife get married, that's just the beginning. Like, it's just, it's just the beginning. And I think all of us are afraid at times of of the journey and like what Claire's going to unpack. As she goes on is like the consolation and the destination. It's the maturing of love. And every, every relationship has to mature. I mean, look at you guys, for example, I know myself I've been professed, you know, 18 years. Like if you guys look at your wedding day and look where you are now and how your love has matured, like, Oh my gosh, what a beautiful seed that was planted that day, but how it's matured. And I just want to say like that's okay. And that's a good thing that love never ends. That's a good thing, which means that we can always grow and learn and we're going to fall and we're going to make mistakes. And we're going to say, Oh, that didn't work out too well, or, okay Lord, thank you for, you know, showing this part of me. I didn't know that about myself. Like thank God. Like Holy cow. I, you know, I just, I think as we go, sometimes we're so afraid of letting go of the consolations or we're afraid of the darkness that we don't get past the third mansion. Because many times we don't understand, like, this is a love journey that the Lord wants to be with us in every way throughout heaven throughout eternity. It's just so gorgeous.

Heather Khym: Yeah and the more that we journey through in relationships, you know, in marriage and in life as life teaches us lessons, like it unlocks different parts of us that we didn't even know ourselves. And as we get to know those parts, it's like, well, this is a new

place now that I get to offer to my spouse or to Jesus. That I am invited to be vulnerable, like to offer the gift of myself there, but to also receive what is being given to me there. And those places can be painful. And sometimes, like, we were just talking about all that before we started the podcast. Sometimes those places are painful, but Sister, I would love to hear specifically for you, because you had this dramatic experience of like leaving the world behind to enter into your vocation. And what was that like initially for you? Like, if you think back, 18 years ago, or it was longer than that when you entered in, right? Like initially.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Oh gosh, it was like almost 23 years ago. Yeah.

Heather Khym: Yeah. So like, what was that like to have that experience very tangibly of like letting the world stay at a distance?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Oh that's a great question. Cause I often laugh, like, because I literally came out of college volleyball, like right. Parties and locker rooms with the girls and like hanging out and like all kinds of crazy stuff. And it just, it makes me laugh when I think of myself that first six months in the convent, the sisters must have been like, this girl is crazy. Ladies, those of you discerning religious life and those of you entering religious life, you are light years ahead of where I was. I'm just, it makes me laugh. I'm like, Oh my gosh. And, and yeah, I remember the first weekend I was there. I was like, so what are we doing this weekend? Let's what's happening? And I'm like, are we going to go out?

Heather Khym: It's Friday. Like what's going on?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: I know. It seems silly. Doesn't it? It's like, I was like fresh off the turnip truck just had no, like no idea what I was joining and I had no idea. And, um, It was, I had a rough, I had a rough learning curve cause I didn't, I just didn't know. I was like, thank God. I think religious life is just so much is better now than it was back, you know, like say 25 years ago. But it was yeah, a dramatic purification and a dramatic reorientation and a dramatic like for me, there's some things that had to be cut away very quickly. And then I think. Once that happened and I was able to be entered into things more deeply. What I found was that that was what I was looking for the whole time. That's what I was looking for the whole time. And I remember being in college, you know, like you said, my life was totally crazy. I'm an addict, you know, just it's crazy. And I remember just sometimes going to church and just there's this, you know, the smell of the beeswax candles and an old church, like there's a smell of the candles. There's a smell like the faint incense. And I just remember sitting there. And I couldn't explain it to you, but it was like home to me and experiencing that in like the, that sensory way. But experiencing that in my soul, as the years have grown has been such a dramatic reorientation of who I am as a person and has allowed that in a sense that cloister, I'm not a cloistered sister, but that cloister of the heart, of the way we live our life, the rule of life we have, the things we say yes to, the things we say no to, has allowed my heart to grow with Christ in the way, that that's what I was looking for the entire time, the entire time. And I think what you find in religious life, whether you're in a cloister or not, is that women are women and we're real people. And like, like she has a chapter, like, you know, in this section called the saints are people too, like we're all people and all of us have wounds and all of us have joys and all of us have sorrows and all of us have hopes. And I think learning to see one another and learning how to love one another and respecting the person and learning how to champion each other. It's just been a huge gift to my heart and

seeing that, you know, all of us have said yes to pour our life out for something beautiful. And that yes. You know, that's a yes that never ends.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And I love how you said it felt like it was a coming home to you. Like when you smell that, like it, is this invitation. I think that's what the Lord is doing. And Claire beautifully writes, it's an invitation to meet him in a place that he is already longing us for. And I came across this quote a couple of weeks ago from a JRR Tolkien. And it says "we all long for Eden and we're constantly glimpsing it, our whole nature at its best and least corrupted it's gentlest and most human is still soaked with a sense of exile." And it's like that we all feel exiled from Eden and we're all trying to find our way home and come. And realizing that part of this is we're pilgrims, like we are pilgrims on a journey and that we will never arrive. Like Sister was saying earlier. And whatever our vocation is, wherever state, whether it is we are single, married, religious life, priesthood. We are in a school of love, you know, and I say this often on the podcast and we never graduate. And like, I just want to get out of first grade. But, you know, like, and just keep on moving, but it is a school of love to learn, you know, how to forgive and how to learn ourself and how to really learn to how to be a gift and accept the gift that we are and how to give that gift to other people.

And it's a, like Sister, we were talking about before we started the podcast, it's a maturing of love and it's a maturing of love and realizing, I was thinking about Mother Teresa and the parts where she talks about her being, that she wanted to be the Saint of darkness. You know, and a part of me still gets really upset. Can I just get on a little soapbox here? Y'all they published her diaries. She asked that they not be published.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Could you imagine your journal being published?

Michelle Benzinger: No. I told you if something happens to me, you and Chris, better get to them before anybody else, you know,

Heather Khym: We need to burn that. Burn those babies.

Michelle Benzinger: And so I was just like, those are your innermost thoughts and you know, and the Lord is using it, and is in the middle of it, and I know he is there, but part of me was just so protective of her. But when Claire speaks to that part, when she writes that letter to the priest and they're standing there and he says, father, please pray for me. Where is Jesus? I just started tearing up, you know, because here's this woman that knows who her bridegroom is, but she doesn't, she can't experience him right now because there's darkness. You know, she can't see him, she can't see his face or the way he's looking at her. But her love is so mature that she keeps on loving in spite of the feeling. She keeps on loving and serving in spite that she can't see where she is going. And because she had already experienced in her soul, I have to believe, that thirst and that longing that he had for her. And I think people, when we talk about intimacy or brideship, what we're really talking about is responding to the desire that the Lord already has for you. He is desiring and he is thirsting for you for your soul. And he just wants you to meet him there. You know, he is longing for you much more, you know, than we are longing for him. And when we just even experience a fraction of that longing that he has for us or desire for us, it is a feeling and an experience that is a foretaste of heaven. And when we just get a fraction of that taste, we want more because this is what we are created for, this is what we are made for. And we only experience that in the inner cloister, in the secret places. And that's, the invitation He is extending to all of us. There's always more with the Lord. There's always more love, more

desire, more deeper, more longing. I think a lot of times we think when we experienced the Lord, there will be ease. And sometimes there is ease and blessings, but a lot of times there's discomfort and hardness. And it is all part of the same package. It is just one big paradox, but it's still all parts that he's inviting us to.

Heather Khym: Yeah. I think in all of this, you know, we have to go back to what is the whole, the whole point of it all, the whole point of life. Like no matter what our circumstances and that is to be in union with Jesus forever. You know, to be in union with the Trinity, forever. And so God gives us these different pathways and along the way, like we will experience trouble. Like Jesus says that the book of John, like in this world you will have trouble, but, but take heart, I've overcome the world. Like he's with us in it all. Whether we feel him, whether we hear him or not, that he is with us and that he can use all of these things as a means for union with him. And it goes on to say, I don't, I'm sorry. I don't know what page it is cause I don't have pages on my copy of this, but it says, "The secret of happiness," she wrote to her sister, "while in this desert, consists in union, in love, no longer being anything but one with him." And Sister, you talked about like that experience of having to have things cut away and I've had that experience too. I still have that. That's still happening in my life for all three of us. Like we still are having these places cut away that steal us from our union with him, that come in between our union with him. And I remember like having a pretty like intimate feeling, like a pretty intimate place in my relationship with God before I was married. And then when I got into this relationship with Jake, I was, it was all new ground for me. And I really struggled with like, how am I supposed to like, love God with my whole heart and love Jake with my whole heart. And then eventually love kids with my whole heart. Like, this is just too hard. And realizing that it is loving Jesus in it all. When I love Jake, I'm loving Jesus. When I love my children, I'm loving Jesus. When I love those in front of me, no matter what my stage of life was, I'm loving Jesus. It's really is all about union with him and not allowing any of those things to take his place.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Oh gosh. Yeah. That's. There's so much in that. And I think what you're talking about really is like the ordering of our loves like Jesus order my loves, right. And we've talked before about how, when our love is ordered correctly, then life flows beautifully. Right? Many times the pain comes because our love is disordered or inordinately placed someplace else. And we're trying to love out of our own power, or we're trying to love people in place of God, we've made somebody else an idol or something like that. And that truth of, you know, of loving Christ in all things. And I think, I know we didn't get, I mean, I feel like we've talked a lot about the chapters. I mean, our readers, our listeners can go through the chapters and hear the echoes of what we're talking about. But what I thought was very interesting here was I'm just gonna go back to page 105, she talks about a rule of life. Because what the rule of life does, a rule of life orders our love. And so a rule of life looks different for me than it looks like for the two of you or when somebody has little kids at home or, you know, maybe a grandmother who's widowed. I mean, just it looks different. But I love what Claire says here on page 105, because she's talking about that the rule of life. And she was like, "For me, who sometimes wanders around wondering what in the world I should do next overwhelmed by the sheer volume of choices and the crush of daily responsibilities. This breeds - she's talking about a superior or talking about like order - this breeds a certain appeal. And so while I don't have superiors save the mutual surrender in marriage, I too have a simple, very simple rule to guide my days, basic prayer, family needs and obligations, set time for work, and even a bit of reading penciled in." And I love this. She

says, "When I know that there's a time for everything, the one thing necessary is never neglected and each next right thing, whether it's a hungry child or a messy kitchen can have my full attention." I just love her. Like for her, like that's her rule of life. And it always goes back to what's most important and that all things have their place, like what you're saying. Heather and what you're saying Michelle is like that the way that God orders us in the journey and how he is unfolding our hearts. That all things are necessary provided the one thing that's most important is in place first. And that's the continual journey of our heart, which leads to the maturing of love, which leads to us as women giving ourselves as bride, as mother, as we experience ourselves as daughters and sisters. And then allows for the intercessory prayer it allows for the reality of like the call to holiness, the call to love, which is the essence of our whole life, because we're made in the image and likeness of love. So I think, I know that's a kind of a roundabout, like one sentence kind of, or in a sense, like one part of the story, but really encompasses, I think, what Claire is revealing to us in those chapters of the maturing of love out of the cloister, which is what's the most important for each one of us.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And I think it's beautiful when it goes on. I think that chapter sets up the other chapters in this part that we've asked you to read is like, she goes on to talk about Edith Stein. She has pulled some beautiful quotes for Edith Stein. It says "It will be an essential duty of each individual to consider how she must shape her plan for daily and yearly living, according to the best circumstances," And she goes along later in that quote, she said, "In other words, a rule, created for my precise vocation and season of life doesn't just save my sanity: it may save my soul." Oh, that's a good thing. You know, and I love that because I think we've talked about it a little bit. Now, our good friend, father Mark Mary has a book coming out called Holy Habits. And basically, almost like for laity. Like how you would develop a rule of life. But I know like we've had Jackie Mulligan on here for reform and all of that. And when Chris my husband lived, we lived up at Covecrest we created a rule of life for everyone to live at this Catholic camp that we ran because we had missionaries. And then we actually implement somewhat of a rule of life in our house. Because like, basically, what are your anchors? Like, what is it that...because the world will toss you about, it's just human nature. Oh, I gotta do this. I gotta do this, but what do you really have to do? And identify that. Like, how do you really safeguard, what is it, prayer? Family? What is it in your life? Prayer, community, friends, your body, take care of everything. What are those things? And get precise. And it looks different for everyone and it looks different for whatever season you're in. And I think one of the things that comes up throughout this book, but also I've been reading, it just seems like it's coming up in a lot of different places that the Lord made each individual soul so unique and so different. So their path is unique and different. And I think it's very easy to fit our mold of holiness in a box. And the Lord is not asking us. He's asking us to be the unique creation that he has created us to be. And so our path will look different from someone else's that doesn't mean that it gives you an excuse, like, well, my path is different, I'm not doing that, you know, but it gives us an invitation to lean in to see where the Holy spirit is guiding us on the path and really lean in to see how he is creating us for his glory. You know, which will be a theme later on in the book for Elizabeth of the Trinity.

Heather Khym: Yeah, that's beautiful. And to just remember that it's the small things. We're talking about big things, but really those are lived out in the small choices that we have to make, the day-to-day decisions. The, you know, like she talks about the gift of a smile. Like it is these small things that we can do with great love. And, and I think that that's what makes

it attainable like in our, in our minds, like we can just go, I can do this. I can be present to this person today. I can do something for someone. I can wash the dishes when I don't feel like it. I can pause for 10 minutes to, you know, resume my connection with Jesus.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: And what a fitting time but Lent and the beginning of Spring. To allow the Lord to reorder these places. I just think of the new beginnings and new blossoming and what's yeah, what's the, like, we're all about the one thing, like, what's the one thing, you know, what is the one thing the Lord is calling me to this Lent as an anchor to help me maintain, um, my time with the Lord and the cloister of my soul. Right. So then love flows out from there. So those are great questions, even Michelle what you were saying about the interior, What does your interior garden look like? I love that, you know, what does it feel like? What does it smell like? What are the flowers? I mean, just as women, we're so good and creating like beautiful places, you know, women make a house a home. And so I wonder for each of our listeners, um, ladies, uh, That, what is your interior cloister look like? What is your interior garden look like? And don't be afraid to dream with the Lord. I just, I love that what a great way to kind of spend some time in prayer this week with Jesus and just to see what he reveals there, which is really beautiful.

Michelle Benzinger: And I also, there is the beautiful prayer by Cardinal Newman on, I think it's faith or feelings, the end the faith and feelings chapter about, it's just a beautiful prayer of what is your calling, your unique calling? I think that's a beautiful prayer just to even pray with, you know, this week as you go on and we'll post it in the show notes also, but it is just a beautiful prayer, you know, what is your unique desire? What is your unique thing? Um, and it talks about giving consolations, all of that kind of stuff. And, um, you know, let me carry it - and I love the last line in this prayer says- let them carry me forward to the thought and the desire of heaven. Just praying through those beautiful prayers. Claire does a beautiful job of just inserting different prayers at the end of chapters. There's one for prayer to redeem lost time from Saint Teresa of Avila and the locust from the last podcast that we just recorded. But yeah, just to enter in deeply in those beautiful tools to access our heart with the Lord.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: So much good stuff, so much good stuff. Well, ladies, as we wrap up our part four, would you like to share with our listeners Heather Khym what is your one thing for the week my friend?

Heather Khym: Well, my one thing, as many of you know, we moved a year ago. It's been a year now into this new house and we have property here. And so we were looking for farm status and we just got our little addition to our property yesterday and it's bees and I'm so excited. So we have all these beehives over, um, in these little boxes, I'll take a picture and put it in the show notes over on one side of our property. And I'm so excited to have them here. Plus, we got the best honey ever that was brought by the guy. So we're not farming the bees, but somebody else comes to take care of them, but we get to have them on our property, which is like super exciting. And honestly, I'm really excited to enter into even a spiritual journey about the bees, because we've been talking about this amongst ourselves for awhile, but to learn from what, like God puts in front of you, what God puts in your life. And so I'm excited to see what God reveals through the bees. Michelle what's your one thing?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: That's so fun.

Michelle Benzinger: My one thing. Well, I have two one things, I'm back to it again -sorry- is the sweet lady from humble mission beads, uh, sent me this beautiful bracelet with a medal of Elizabeth of the Trinity, and I love it. And so I've just been wearing it. And the metal is the, uh, she got the medal from France, from the convent that St. Elizabeth Trinity was from. And it's just a beautiful gift to have to wear around my wrist. And just as we're on this journey of inner cloister, it has just been great. And I also have to give a shout out to the priest and friars of the Carmelites that do the Institute of Carmelite studies. I got in the mail this week, a copy of the interior castles study guide. From St. Teresa of Avila. So it has study guide and questions and all these footnotes. And I absolutely love it. And actually they have one for interior castle and they have one for Saint Terese story of a Soul and they have one for Saint Teresa of Avila foundations. But I love study guides because it has deeper questions and it gives more context and stuff like that. So yeah, we will link it here. And so, but it was so fun as we were talking about interior castle earlier today.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: mm. Mm. Well, that's wonderful. My one thing for the week is a song that kept coming up in my Spotify playlist. And I'm like, I like this song and I finally paid a little bit more attention to it. And it's a song by an artist named Jonathan Ogden. And it's from his EP, called Spring, which is very fitting. And the song is called With You, which is actually based on Psalm 8:3 where, when I look at the heavens Lord and I, who am I that you keep me in mind? You know? And so it's like one of those songs you just groove to. I think of Fr. Josh Johnson everytime I hear it, cause I could totally see him just like singing it and like rolling his windows down, but like what a great time for spring. You know, when spring, finally winter is over and you roll the windows of your car down for the first time, and you can smell like the fresh flowers on the breeze. And so I think you're going to like the whole, it's a mini album. I think you'll like the whole thing called Spring, but I really liked the song With You. Cause it's just saying, Lord, I just want to be with you. Like when I see the heavens the work of your hands, like I just want to be with you and I'm like, amen. Yeah. Amen to that. So,

Michelle Benzinger: um, and one more thing I'm just going to add, we touched on it, but we didn't go deep dive into the chapter about a brideship and, um, all about religious sisters and the beautiful call to consecrated life and that. So I'm also going to link the podcast episode with our good friend, Fr. John Burns, because he does such a beautiful job when he was on our podcast, explaining the beauty of the call of religious life and how they're a prophetic sign of the bride. And he just does a lovely job. So we will post that also in our link here for our show notes. Just so if you want to dive deeper into that, or if you want to re-listen to that episode, it's just such a beautiful episode explaining the beauty and the complimentary of all women to be bride and mother and, um, Yeah. So we'll post that there.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: Amen. Well, listeners, well, I think we've given you a lot. I know myself to ponder this week. So we're praying for that place of your heart, right? The cloister of your heart where Jesus comes to dwell with you, because he loves you. So we are praying for you this week and we hope you have a wonderful week. Until next time we will be Abiding Together.

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