

## S10 E14 - Advent Part 3

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**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Hi and welcome to season 10 of the Abiding Together Podcast. We are so excited to have you with us this season. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sr Miriam James Heidland, and every week I am joined by two of my dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. We talk about our life with Christ. We talk about big things, small things, beautiful things, sorrowful things. We laugh, we cry you'll fit right in. You are most welcome here. So please grab a cup of coffee, settle in and welcome home.

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of the "Abiding Together Podcast," which you can also watch on our YouTube channel, and we are diving into week three of advent, which is-

**Michelle Benzinger:** Week three, we lighted the three candles.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yes, we did. We have our advent wreath here and we have our pink-

**Michelle Benzinger:** Week three.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Candle lit, which is-

**Michelle Benzinger:** Week three, we wear pink.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yes, the rose. We could call it rose.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Rose, sorry.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** It's a Sunday of joy. Sunday of joy. So we've been alternating between two scripture verses, which is Isaiah 61:1-3, and then the prologue of the Gospel of John. So we'll go back to Isaiah 61, since we kind of delved into it, and we will open that again, in light of joy and the childlike faith of Saint Therese. So here we go, Isaiah 61:1-3: The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion. To bestow on them a crown of beauty, instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise, instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called Oaks of Righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. As we read that, I've never thought of that in light of Saint Therese before, but that is her.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yes, I was just thinking the same thing.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** That is so her, and this little shoot that was like this little cedar that came up, and, you know, this tiny little like sapling that came up into an Oak of Righteousness. And just it was her littleness and her childlike faith that was such a blessing to others. That was such a healing balm to others, that freed others from their captivity, Everybody from priests she would correspond with to criminals that she prayed for too. Just her beautiful heart, and so unknown in this life. It wasn't till after she died that people even really knew. Even sisters in her convent were surprised, and they were like, who is this?

**Heather Khym:** Little Therese? Come on.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Exactly, and she became an Oak of Righteousness in her littleness and in her childlike faith. That we love little children for a variety of reasons. And that's why Jesus is moved to become like children, but I just was reading them like, that's so Therese. That is, she is the preacher of the good news, the oil of anointing upon her, the oil of gladness, and the beauty from the ashes. And all of the things she suffered. And all of that of how she allowed it to transform her into this beautiful, wondrous, radiant child of God.

**Michelle Benzinger:** And I think there's something about Therese, like her simple, like we've talked about this before, but where people think that she is, you know, sappy and sweet and kind. I mean, she is kind, but, like, that she is fierce. And she may be little, but she is fierce. And there's a strength to her love, and there's a strength to her hope and her confidence and her joy. But I think more than anything, there's a strength to her trust. She trusted the Lord would do what he said he was gonna do. And she trusted her own desires in the Lord. Like, she desired to be a Saint, and she trusted the Lord that he would make her one. Like, she had so much trust in him that he would make her a great Saint. And I think she's the perfect saint to go along with joy this week, and we'll talk about it in a minute, but, like her Christmas miracle that she had. And Christmas was, like, a time where she had a mass conversion and transformation in our own hearts. And, like, you know, that we watched the movies like *Miracle On 34th Street* and something like that, and then there's something about the magical time of Christmas. But, and yes, that can be all Hollywood and Disney, or whatever you want to say. But there is something magical about Christmas because Christmas is the season of miracles, and Christmas is the season of incarnational miracles. So what kind of miracle are we looking for this Christmas season? What are we looking for, for Jesus to transform us into something new?

**Heather Khym:** Yeah, and not a miracle as in like a fairytale idea.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Exactly.

**Heather Khym:** But God performs real miracles. I think I've even heard some priests say from the pulpit, like, you know, those are the things that happened 2000 years ago. And I just want to go, no, no, no, no. Like, God is the same yesterday, today, forever. And He is a miracle-working God and wants to work miracles in us now. I think this is a beautiful time to bring to the Lord, once again. It's like something that is a deep prayer of our heart, a deep ache of our heart, to ask him to come, and do something wonderful. And it doesn't mean he's going to do it instantaneously. I mean, that's, that's not relationship, you know, that's demanding or whatever. We're putting God in a position of like, do what I said right now. But to ask, you know, with that trust of, like, if God wills it, if this would be a part of His glorious plan, because He's a good God and desires good things for us, even greater than what we want

for ourselves, you know, that he would work miracles, if not then to change our hearts, right, to heal our hearts. So, yeah, I think that's important to remember. Like, Christmas is filled with a magical time and a magical sense, you know, but, but they're real things in there, that it's not like magic, like, you know, that you hear in a fairytale, but it is, like, the stuff of God, the God who breathes out the stars, the God who is filled with wonder, and who fills us with wonder, you know. Who has created this world full of wonder that we, He wants to engage with us, you know?

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yeah, the virgin is with child - talk about a miracle. I mean, it doesn't come out of nowhere. The idea of like, yeah, the magical season of like, oh, that's, it's truly miraculous. It is truly miraculous. And that Jesus comes like true God and true man. If the first thousand years of the church, the heresies were about Christ, you know, is He true God and true man? Is He half God, half man? Is He really God but not a man, is He a man, but not God? And that for us now, we've kind of worked through those things theologically in the crisis. It's no longer like who is God, the crisis now is who is man? That reality of people coming to grapple -

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yes. You know, that was good right there. Love it, go back to that. We grapple now...

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** The crisis now is not who is God, but who is man? I mean, it always is who is God, but now the crisis is, and you could see our disintegration in our society today, all the questions we're asking about male and female and what does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a person? What is it? And those are real things. Those are real things. And so, the reality of Christ coming as a man, true God and true man, born of a Virgin, born in poverty, born in littleness, born in nakedness, born in vulnerability, entrusted to St. Joseph, entrusted to him at the humility of God. I think I'm always struck at advent, especially by the humility of God.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Me too.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** That he is so humble.

**Michelle Benzinger:** That he would become a baby.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yes. And so dependent. So dependent on us.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Oh my goodness, yes.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** And that's what children are. Literally, you guys we've spoken about this, especially you as having biological children, the dependence of children.

**Heather Khym:** And fragile. He could have been crushed.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yes.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Just, isn't He stunning?

**Heather Khym:** He didn't have to come that way, that's what's crazy. Like, He did not have to come that way. He chose to come that way, like, to teach us something, to teach us that it's okay to be little like that. It's good to be little, and that powerful things can be little. Powerful people can be little.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yes! And that He doesn't desire to dominate us or to destroy us or to fracture us. But He comes as one of us. It does, it just continually shatters our paradigms of who we think God is. I'm so glad He does that. And I love this particular quote by St. Therese that you have here, Michelle, that you wrote for us in our show notes. And she says, "Jesus, help me simplify my life by learning what you want me to be and becoming that person."

**Michelle Benzinger:** I love that.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Jesus, help me simplify my life by learning what you want me to be and becoming that person.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Amen.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Which makes life very simple.

**Heather Khym:** That's razor sharp focus right there.

**Michelle Benzinger:** It is, and I think that we make things more difficult than they really are. And I think we add a lot of layers that are not supposed to be there, you know? And I think, like, even Padre Pio, that's a lot of his messages. It's simple, you know. Like, even he's like, you eat at the same time, you sleep at the same time, you pray at the same time. Padre Pio would tell his spiritual children that. Like, and we make things so vast and difficult. And really, it's a simple thing that is very rich and, Like we were talking about in the last episode. But life is actually, I think we make a lot of things harder than they actually really are, you know. There's complexities to life, you know, but I don't think it is as burdensome as we make it.

You know? I think his load is easy. Like, the burden is light. The load is easy. I think it's how we carry it.

**Heather Khym:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, Therese is special to each of us in a unique way, you know? And I didn't know her for a while and then was kind of introduced to her by somebody. And I remember, I remember saying, wow, she's fascinating. Like I'm really captivated by the Saint that she was telling me about. And I said, where can I find out more about her? And she just said, oh, she'll find you.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Oh, that's a good way to put it, yes.

**Heather Khym:** Okay, and so I left there and all of a sudden I saw her everywhere. Like, she was just everywhere. And she's an easy saint to get to know because she's not difficult. She was so smart. I mean, she's one of the doctors of the church, but it's simple. It's not easy. It's not easy. The things that she did were incredibly hard, the way that she loved, the way that she opened her heart to Jesus. It's so hard in some ways, but simple. It's very, very simple to grasp. It's the little way, you know. And I think, like, as we all were talking about maturity a lot, maturity doesn't mean that you can't be little. I think there's a littleness that you embrace when you become mature, when you realize, I don't know everything, I am not everything, I actually don't want to be everything. I'm not every woman, or whatever it might be. And I don't have to try to be every woman, you know. But to embrace that littleness, I think is when humility and when calm and peace come. Because there's a letting go of, like, all the things that you grasp after. You're just content, you know. There's a contentment that comes with littleness.

**Michelle Benzinger:** There is. And I think there's a contentment that comes with hiddenness, that, like, you are so confident that you are seen by the Lord. And I think that's what's so evident with Therese. Like people in her own convent didn't know, like, the depth of her love, the depth of her love for the Lord, or the love that the Lord had for her. Like how she let the Lord expand in her littleness, like, and become big in her littleness. Like, she was hidden, but she was hidden in his confident love, you know? And there's something beautiful about that. So, you know, are we, do we trust our hiddenness in Him? You know, what were you going to thought, Sister?

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** I appreciate how she says, simplify my life by learning. Learning. And we talk about how the discipleship, and the root, discernment, a -disc, that root means to be student, to be somebody who learns. So as, as disciples, we're always learning from Christ. And that's one of the things I love about the Chosen Series. I love just the visual imagery of them learning. Like Christ is literally teaching them things. It's just so great. And I love that portrayal of how human they are.

**Michelle Benzinger:** I was just about to say, I love their humanity.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** You know, and they've obviously taken creative liberties in certain ways, but there've been moments, I'm like, you know, that's what they would have said. Like, you know, that's exactly what they would have thought, what they would have said. And it's just so wonderful that Christ in his humility is discipling us. He's allowing us to be students of Him, and that student that, that discipling, or that being a student is a lifelong journey. None of us ever, you know, there's such a heresy like I'm post-Christian like, what does that even mean? There's no such thing as post-Christian, I've matured beyond Christ. Like there is no maturity beyond like, ain't nothing beyond Christ. So it's like, that continual being a student of learning as we grow, and so allowing that reality, that like turning our faces to Christ and saying, Jesus, tell me who I am. Tell me who I am, and tell me who you are. Open my heart. So, so I know, Bob, Dr. Rob Schuchts often tells a story of how, when he was just early on in his spiritual life, was, I'm sitting, talking, to a very well-known spiritual director at the time for this like eight day silent retreat. And the spiritual director looked at him and said, you know, Bob like, you know, you're like an old man on a rocker. He's like, you're moving a lot but you're not getting off the front porch. And he said he just started laughing.

**Michelle Benzinger:** That is a great analogy!

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** And it's something like, we're rocking, but we ain't going anywhere. And the spiritual director is like, you have to let go of this part of your, what you're holding onto. And Bob's like, that seems too easy. And he's like, well, there you go. He's like, it just seems too easy, but He's like it's not. You have to surrender that part of your life, and then you'll have movement. But you're trying to do it yourself and make it really complicated. He's like, you're making it way more complicated than it needs to be. I can, don't we all have places in our life like that, that we're the old ladies on the front porch, or like surveying the neighborhood ... And it's like mind your business, like, mind your own business. You know, it was just this, this things like that, that we can get so distracted by, which Saint Therese is continually calling back to such hope, and such faith, and such joy of the little things. The little things done for the Lord are great.

**Heather Khym:** Yeah, and I love how she simplifies even, like, vocation, and calling to say, my vocation is love. You know, I think sometimes that can be very complex for people to go, what should I be doing, Lord? I want to do great things for you. Like what should it be? And maybe I need to go here. I'm discerning, you know, and it's like, there's turmoil associated with discerning. And I, not that we shouldn't take time to discern. And there is a process of discernment. The church is very clear about, you know, and there's there's people to help us along that way, but it doesn't mean that we have to pause and wait, as in be inactive, like, our vocation is to love,

and love is active. And Therese was so good at that, at loving in the little ways. And I think often we underestimate that. We're like, well, I want to do great things for God, or look at what they're doing, they're doing amazing things for God. And we've talked about this before. I'm just maybe at home right now, or I'm just a student or I'm just a kid or just a mom, whatever it might be. And I think in all of those places, we have many, many, many people and many, many, many opportunities to love. And that is the greatest of all. Is it not? I mean, Jesus says that this is the greatest, it's the greatest of all is to love God with all our heart, and then to love our neighbor too.

**Michelle Benzinger:** And I love what she said, and that this other quote is, "Jesus has chosen to show me the only way, which leads to that divine furnace of love. It is the way of childlike self surrender, the way of a child who sleeps, afraid of nothing in it's father's arms." And I think like, okay, as old, as I like to point out, as I'm getting, yes, that I'm your elder, but I think one of the things the Lord is showing me that it's really childlike self surrender. Like the older I get, the littler I get. The more I grow in the Lord, the smaller I get. The more I grow in the Lord, really the poorer I get. And I come to face with my own poverty. I mean, I think the last couple of months, like, really coming to grips with your own humanity and areas that you really cannot, you really just almost don't stomach, like, about yourself, you know? And it's not like this disgust or dislike or unhealthy dislike about yourself, it's just poverty. And you're like, Lord, this is one of the places where I need you in. But I mean, I can so relate to Bob, but I'm like, rocking in the chair, how can I fix it? How can I fix it? You know, like, here I am, and my spiritual director is like, how can you surrender it? And how can we embrace it? And it's like, can you love yourself there and stay in the darkness? And like, do you invite Him into there? Do you treat yourself with compassion? And, like, I was really praying about that. Like, do I measure my days now by - I used to productive moments, I'm excuse me, productive movements - And now I'm really measuring my day by present moments. Like how present I am to myself, how present I am to the Lord, how present I am to the people around me. That's just been a huge shift, but it's like, like she said before, like, simply telling me what you want me to be and becoming that person. And then I added a lot of extra layers that weren't mine to add, you know? And then I wonder why I'm so tired because I'm carrying things are not mine to carry. You know? Like about myself, about other people, about extra tasks that are not mine. But like, why am I saying yes to saying certain things, because it's expectations that really no one else is putting on me. I'm putting them on myself. So just that self surrender, you know, and that transformation, and that all of us have those moments. And I think Sister, I think it'd be really good, like the Christmas miracle, when I read this part of the story, The Story of Soul, it's like one of my favorites, but I think about it, and it always reminds me of you because you had an experience almost like that, like a deep transformation with Therese last year in your personal life. And I just love the story about St. Therese, you know.



**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Do you want to read it for us?

**Michelle Benzinger:** No, will you? And so you've got a better story time voice than I do. Once upon a time, with sister.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Okay, so where should we start? Let's see. Should we be start, was it, we can read the whole thing if you want, but -

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yeah, go ahead. Yeah it's not that long.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** We've got some time... Therese Martin was a stubborn and childish little girl. Her mother Zelig was terribly worried about her and her future. She wrote in a letter, "As for Therese, one cannot tell how she will turn out. She is so young and heedless, her stubbornness is almost unconquerable. When she has said, no, nothing will make her change. One could leave her all day in the cellar without getting her to say yes, she would sooner sleep there."

**Michelle Benzinger:** Parents of the strong-willed, parents that should make you relax right there.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** So then these are Saint Therese's her own words. She's like, "When I got home from midnight mass, I knew that I should find my shoes standing at the fireplace, filled with presents as I had always done since I was little. So you can see, I was still treated as a baby. Father used to love to see how happy I was, and hear my cries of delight as I took each surprise packet from my magic shoes, and his pleasure made me happier even still. But the time had come for Jesus to cure me of my childness, my childishness, even in the innocent joys of childhood were to go, he allowed father to feel cross this year, instead of spoiling me, and as I was going upstairs I heard my father say, 'Therese off to', sorry, 'Therese ought to have outgrown all this sort of thing, and I hope this will be the last time.' This cut me to the quick, and Celine, who knew how very sensitive I was, whispered to me, 'Don't come down again just yet. You'll only go and cry if you open up your presents now in front of father.' But I was not the same Therese anymore. Jesus had changed me completely. I held back my tears and trying to stop my heart from beating so fast. I ran down into the dining room. I picked up the shoes and unwrapped my presents joyfully, looking all the while as happy as a queen. Father did not look cross anymore now, and entered into the fun of it, while Celine thought she must've been dreaming."

**Heather Khym:** Her sister's like, who's that?

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** "But this was no dream. Therese had gotten back forever. Therese had gotten back forever the strength of mind that she had lost at four and a half." And her mother had died at four and a half. We talk about childhood traumas. And so it goes on to say, "Therese would later call this her Christmas miracle. And it marked a turning point in her life. It propelled her forward in her relationship with God. And two years later, she joined a local Carmelite order of nuns. She saw the miracle as an action of God's grace, flooding her soul, giving her the strength and courage to do what was good, true, and beautiful. It was her Christmas gift from God. And it changed the way she approached life. Therese finally understood what she must do to love God more intimately, and left her childish ways of becoming, to become a true child of God. She would still remain, she would still retain a little stubbornness, but in a good way. United to God's will, and trusting her life entirely to God." And I think we've all had moments, turning points in our life where we can testify, we can testify to the, a singular moment of single grace in our life where the Lord just pierced through, you know, in the 12 Steps we say, God do for me what I cannot do for myself. And we have just moments of little moments, but we have all powerful moments of just the outpouring of God's grace that just completely changed something in our hearts where we noticed a marked difference in our heart. And we have those before and after things where like before I was here after, you know. And we've all had those, and they're so grateful. And there are many times I'm prayed for that too. I'm like, Lord, this is an area of poverty for me. I cannot. And whenever, whenever you wanna do Christmas miracle, I'm okay with that. Anytime you want to do that.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Amen, amen, yeah.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** That is powerful.

**Heather Khym:** Can you share some of that for you? About a couple of years ago that Michelle was referring to?

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yeah, I think for me, one of the things was we were doing a Novena to Our Lady, and yeah, it was just a complete area of poverty in my life that I had been journey with for a long time. And I just said, Lord, I need your help here. Like I need Our Lady's intercession. And I just was sitting in our chapel in our tiny little convent where we live in South Texas, and I just had a distinct moment of Our Lady coming to my heart. And it was like, she drew a line in the sand. She like drew a line in the sand for me. And then she said, this will be no more. This will be no more. And there was, I, it was something that I've been praying about for years, and she just came just so unbidden. And I mean, in that regard, it was just so, I wasn't telling you what to do, but she just came like a mother, and she drew a line in the sand in my heart, said, this will be no more. And in my life, even though there's parts of my heart that are still tender in that place, it has never been the

same again. And I know, like it's like the gift of sobriety for me, when I stopped drinking. I know to this day, I can tell you that was a gift from God. Like that was another one, that I couldn't conjure up the gift of sobriety. I tried to get sober. I couldn't do it. And the Lord intervened in my life with a gift of sobriety that I'm so grateful for every day. And I, it's such a freeing thing of like, I can easily proclaim God's love there, 'cause I had nothing to do with it. Like I just, I would dispose myself to receive the gift, but I didn't give it to myself, and I couldn't conjure it up. And so, we all have those miracles in our life that even they're smaller, bigger, we're like, that was a turning moment in my life. Like that was a defining moment, you know. I'm sure you guys have some yourself.

**Heather Khym:** Yeah, the one that's coming, I mean, yeah, there's a few, but the one that's coming to mind for me was a prayer time that I had, I really been struggling, which I've shared before, over the course of a couple of years, like anxiety and depression just gripped me in a way that I had never, ever, ever experienced before. And as I went down into the roots of that, you know, and it was really revealed to me in prayer that the roots of that were this self-reliance that had come from trauma in my life where I believed that God was, you know, smaller than the enemy, that the enemy was stronger. That evil was more powerful, that the darkness was more, you know, it was bigger than the light. And that was like a pivotal lie that was, like, in my heart, that changed, like, how I lived for the next 20 years. You know, really, like, under this fear. And like you talked about in a previous episode, hyper-vigilance. Because when the enemy is bigger in your mind, then, and you know that, and you feel like you're the only one who knows that, then you have to protect everybody. So that was me. I was always watching for the evil that was lurking around the corner, and it could come at any moment. And I had experienced that myself. So I was just like, this is going to come again. And that's when play stopped for me. You and I are very similar in that way. So I stopped playing when I was like 11 or 12 years old. That was it. I was like, there's too many, I need to be watchful. And I, there was a seriousness and a fear that gripped me, like, basically at all times it was just under the surface, and I remembered entering into this deep time of prayer when I was together with some friends. This was with Pat Ott, yeah, she's just beautiful. I was sitting with her in prayer, and she was just sort of asking like me to invite Jesus in to some of these memories. And when he came, I had this vision, it was just like, in my mind, in my imagination, I could just see, like there was this desolate land. And I had that vigilance of, like, there's evil coming, there's evil coming. And Jesus came in, and under his feet, instead of the desert, like, grass came out under His feet. And as He walked in, the grass just spread out, like, the further that He walked, and it spread out under me, and a tree grew up and all of a sudden I'm sitting on the branch of the tree and looking at Jesus. And He's like, you can, you can play here. And I was like, what are you talking about? This is my conversation I'm having with the Lord. I'm like, no, I can't because there's evil that's coming, and we need to be watchful. And like, why aren't you watching it? So

then, I have to watch. It was like this whole dynamic that was going on. And He just looked me deep in my eyes. And He said, Heather, you can play here. It's okay. You don't have to live like this anymore. And the scripture that came was Psalm 18, where at the end of this, like crying out to God, and God coming thundering down, it says, He set me free in the open. And He rescued me.

**Michelle Benzinger:** He set me in wide spaces. Yes.

**Heather Khym:** Because He loves me. And that was this wide open field that was in this, like, vision in my mind, you know, where I was just set free, like, to play, and to be. And so that, that moment really changed everything. I mean, it changed my physical struggles that I had with anxiety. Like they quickly dispersed, and you just see like how some deep roots can be with you for so long. And even though I suffered for so long, it wasn't instantaneous. But when the Lord comes, and breakthrough comes, sometimes that part can be instantaneous.

**Michelle Benzinger:** It does, it does.

**Heather Khym:** And that marked change that you're like, this day, I was- Actually earlier this morning I was like this, and then now I'm like this, and I'm living differently now. And there's something that's been restored in my heart that I could not do for myself. There is nothing that I could do to change that within myself, only He could do it. And I think that this is Therese, you know, this is her story over and over again. She knew there was certain things, many, many things in her life, because she was so little, only God could do.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Oh, absolutely.

**Heather Khym:** She was like, I'm just going to be little. Oh, I want to be a Saint, but He's just going to make an elevator for me. Like, so I was just like, be lifted out because I can't do it, you know, but He'll just do it. And yeah, there's this trust, like, this simple trust. And gosh, I need that in so many more areas of my life. It's like, I've had breakthrough here, but oh, I make things very complicated sometimes. I'm very serious about certain things, you know? Like, yes, the Lord still has a lot to do here with me, but that's the hope of, like, continuing on the journey, you know?

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yeah, I think for me, like this whole year has been an experience of, like, just transformation in little things, but I realized a couple of weeks ago, it was like you said, but I realized all of a sudden that you don't think that there's any movement or any great movement. And all of a sudden they're like this huge movement shift in your heart and you didn't realize. And when I was praying about it, it was like, the Lord is like, you finally allow the roots to go where

they're supposed to go, and they're going deep and deep, but you don't see roots. You don't see anything underneath. And all of a sudden, a flower burst forth. And you're like, hey, when did that start blooming? And, like, you realize, oh my gosh, that is within there. Like, but that it had gone deep, and had been cultivated, and it had been hidden, and it had been down, and that there was trust muscles, like I said before, that weren't there before. But there was intimacy muscles there in the relationship that weren't there before, because I allowed Him to come into these deep places, and these little places. And it's uncomfortable, you know? Like even Therese doing this, like, you know, like she had to make a choice, you know,

**Heather Khym:** She wasn't passive.

**Michelle Benzinger:** No, she wasn't passive. And she didn't, like, numb her emotions. She put her emotions in right order. Like, she didn't stop feeling. It wasn't like what we said earlier in the other series, it wasn't like, press through, girl, press through. Like, you know, but it was, Lord, you have more for me. And let me accept your invitation to more, you know? That you are the more of miracles, and I'm going to take you up on that offer. So I think for each and every one of us, just praying through that, you know? And I love it even in the story that we read, which said that this was no dream. Like you said, this was no fairy tale. This is the God of miracles. And He wants to do miracles within us.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** And maybe that's something that we could spend time this week doing, is just asking Lord to call to mind the places that it's happened to all of us.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yes.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Because we've all had at least one time in our life where we have witnessed in our own journeys, something that we could not do for ourselves that God did for us. And those are our joyful mysteries. Those are glorious mysteries. And they keep bearing life in our life, if we allow them to do that. And then to sing them Magnificat in that place of praise.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yes, amen, amen.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Well, my dear friends, should we talk about our one things for the week?

**Heather Khym:** Yes, we shall. My one thing,

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Are you going to sing for us?

**Heather Khym:** No, I'm not-

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** That's my one thing. My one thing is Heather Khym's going to sing.

**Heather Khym:** But my one thing is music. Oh my gosh, I've got some new skills to learn. So the album, *Forever, Amen*, by Steffany Gretzinger has been on for many months. Like, it's like, it is a great album. I always loved Steffany Gretzinger. But sometimes I'm like when she's, you know, in a big room and there's lots of people there, and I'm like, whoa, it's a lot, like there's a lot going on. It can be kind of intense. And because she's so free, she's way more free than me.

**Michelle Benzinger:** The spirit of the Lord is very free, and that's where Steffany lives.

**Heather Khym:** Which it makes me uncomfortable in a good way. But this album in particular is just slower. It's quieter. There's something about, there's depth to it.

**Michelle Benzinger:** There's a contemplative to it, yes.

**Heather Khym:** And Matt Maher is on one of the songs, which is just really beautiful, like some of the collaborations that they have. So that's a good one, it will be in the show notes. Yeah.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** I think for me, we talked about the National Shrine of Saint Therese, which we're near right here, but-

**Michelle Benzinger:** Oh my gosh!

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yes, we have a, I just I'll keep the details confidential, but we, Dr. Bob, and some of us on the staff at John Paul II Healing Center gave a healing retreat for bishops. And so it was supposed to be held in Nashville. And then this random storm came, and totally diverted our plans. And somebody on the team called this retreat center, that at the Shrine of St. Therese, and they actually not only had rooms for us, there was nobody else in the entire retreat center. So we ended up having this-

**Michelle Benzinger:** I didn't know that.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Yeah, we ended up having this healing retreat for bishops there, and the room we gave all the talks in was called the St. Therese Room. And it had pictures of Saint Therese all around the room. And it was such a,

every single person, all of us on the team, all the bishops that came, every single one of us had a distinct impression that Therese herself called us to her Shrine, like to her heart, to bless us with her goodness and her love. And so it's, yeah, it's just such a special place. And just thinking of that, like, that's another miracle that Therese was like, nope, you're coming here, and I'm going to take care everyone, take care of the bishops. And it was just a week of tremendous grace. And so I just want to say thanks to St. Therese for her bringing our hearts to Jesus. That was a very special week. So we'll put the information to the Shrine on our show once again, like we did before, but it was just lovely. I would, if you're ever in Darien, Illinois, please come and check it out.

**Heather Khym:** It's like the biggest one outside of France. And apparently there's like a, her written copy of Story of Soul.

**Michelle Benzinger:** I know, so lovely. My one thing is called Behold, and it is actually art. Katie, that I met, and this is the Behold Ministries, and this is: On the Mystery of the Rosary, the Luminous Mysteries. And it is so beautiful, but it is a bit, is Visio Divina. Not really.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** All the garden.

**Michelle Benzinger:** All the garden, that is beautiful with artwork. And I absolutely love it. But I love it because it is the mosaic artwork that is in the John Paul II Shrine. Which, I love it, and it's based on the Luminous Mysteries, which is light. And so I think this is such a perfect thing to do in this season of light.

**Heather Khym:** So you meditate on the image.

**Michelle Benzinger:** You meditate on the image.

**Heather Khym:** And listen to what the Lord is saying to you.

**Michelle Benzinger:** Yes, it is so beautiful. And I love it because it's artistic, and beautiful, and she has one on each mystery of the rosary, and she has actually another one, faith over fear. And so it's so beautiful. And so I will link it in the show notes.

**Sister Miriam James Heidland:** Oh, that's such good stuff. Such good stuff. Thank you for joining us this week, friends. And yeah, maybe this week, ask the Lord to call to your mind the places where He's performed Christmas miracles in your own life.

And let's thank God for those places. And just thank God for the gift of people like Saint Therese, and all the ways that the Lord is calling us to live in the joy of the season. Until next week we will be abiding together, God bless you, see you then!

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