

S11 E10

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:00:00] Hi, friends and welcome to Season 11 of the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest, and encouragement in your journey with Jesus Christ. Every week, I'm joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. And we talk about all things Christ, about life, about beauty, about sorrow. We laugh, we cry, you'll fit right in. So grab a cup, settle in, and welcome home.

Heather, Michelle, welcome. Welcome, welcome, welcome to week four of Lent.

Heather Khym: Thank you. I don't know. How do you say thank you to Lent. Thank you? So happy to be here. Not totally, but I'm happy with you guys. I know, but I do love that this time of year, like things are starting to... [00:01:00] The buds are coming out. Like there's already these like signs of hope. It's like, so we're in Lent. We're still feeling it, but it's like signaling. You know, the hope of resurrection, the hope of new life, the like, and I want to really take that in this year of like all the signs that God gives us along the way, and in the journey that speak to the new life that's supposed to come. It's not lent forever.

You know, it's not winter forever. Like there always is a spring that comes. There's always is fruit that comes, a new blooming that comes and so similar for our own hearts. So yeah, just trying to pay attention to what God's doing right now with that.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Hmm. I'm not sure if I ever said this. Maybe I have, because I feel like we've said everything on this podcast over the course of 11 seasons. We've said it all. I think we've said it like six times over, but when I lived in Seattle and you know ran that daycare after school, there was one tree that I would always watch in the springtime. And cause it would feel like Seattle, you know, cold and rainy and just dreary. And there was this one tree I'm like, are we going

to do it this year tree, are we going to make it to spring? [00:02:00]
What's going to happen? And when that tree would start to bud, it was like, all right, we're going to, we're going to make it. It's not going to be winter forever.

Heather Khym: That's awesome.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Always winter, never Christmas.

Heather Khym: Michelle does not have that issue down there down in Florida.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Michelle does have that. It's always Christmas at the Benzinger house.

Michelle Benzinger: Hey, it's been kind of cold over here, but yeah, I'm right there with you.

Heather Khym: No it hasn't, don't lie, don't lie to us.

Michelle Benzinger: Hey, I'm wearing a sweater right now. Look at that. Yeah. But ya know, it's beautiful. I mean, isn't that what Lent means is spring. So there's something about just the blooming and the becoming of the season. That is beautiful. You know, but then you're like, okay, halfway through, is it over yet? Come on. Here we go. And so the craving for Chick-fil-a on Friday is still real. So come on people come on.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Bring it on. Okay, so we're going to start, on page...part 3 of almsgiving, which is...well the page 116 is the fourth Sunday of Lent, but we're going to, I'm going to back it up [00:03:00] a bit to part 3, a few pages before that.

And it talks about almsgiving and the quote that we're going to use for this section of our series is by Saint Ambrose, who says "No one heals himself by wounding another," which we can talk about that. And the quote for our time will be from the gospel of Luke 15:31, which is from

the parable of the prodigal son where the father comes out to the older son, and after his older son has just expressed his deep resentment and bitterness toward his father, he just looks at him with great kindness and he says, son, you're always with me. And all that is mine is yours. Right. All that is mine is yours. And so maybe as we journey into this section on almsgiving, Michelle, and we talk about belonging to each other and our hearts are pierced for the sake of each other, what is your experience of almsgiving as like, not just money, obviously, but your presence and your love, which actually helps to heal others and bring them into communion.

Michelle Benzinger: I think there's something so beautiful about almsgiving. Like, I love how you said, even almost tithing your presence, you know, and making sure that you are present to the [00:04:00] things that are most important.

And I've been going through a certain course and one of them that they talk about is legacy. What legacy do you want to leave and what really bears fruit that will last, and we talk about that a million times on the podcast also, but what is the legacy that I want to leave? And one of them is thinking I almost prided myself on things that I could get done and multitasking and realizing one, multitasking is not a reality.

And two, that the things that matter are really the small and the ordinary, oftentimes. They're the everyday in the ordinary. And the big things that happen, especially in my children's life or my husband's life or the people around me in person, I have to discover them. Or be really attentive to them in the everyday and the ordinary and that's where the big things happen.

The shifts in the hearts, the conversations that happen on the front porch, the conversations that happen around the dinner table, the conversations that...it's not the big defining moments, it's the little everyday moments that really shaped a life. And which has been such, [00:05:00] it's kind of been like a big shift for me to realize that. It's also

been a real training to learn how to be attentive to my own heart and therefore be attentive to other people's hearts.

Like, I don't think I was doing a bad job, but I wasn't doing a full job, you know what I mean? Because I wasn't at peace in my own being, so therefore, how can I be at peace with other people and just noticing attentive to the inner workings of other people's hearts and attuning to them. It's a beautiful thing.

I think a lifelong lesson to learn how to love well, yeah. Heather, what are your thoughts?

Heather Khym: Yeah. I like, Sister, how you're drawing out here, you know, that it can help us be healed from our self-centeredness, which we all have. You know, even if we give a lot, sometimes it's not really with a spirit of generosity, you know, it may just be a default or there might be other reasons for that, but, but yet to really call us into a place or presence, true empathy, where we're able to like put ourselves in the shoes of others and [00:06:00] go, wow. Like what, what would this feel like? What would this be like? And to extend outside of ourselves, because we so often really are self-absorbed. We really are. And even if we're unaware of it, many of our thoughts, our actions are the direction of how we move through our day is centered around what I need or what I need to get through this day well, or whatever that might look like. And so I love that aspect of going outside ourselves and, and that can happen in the little moments, like you said, Michelle, or the big moments that God provides for us. I think at the end of the day, it is truly looking at the other as this is Jesus here before me.

And can I love him? Will I, will I love him in these little people, these little places, the mess on the floor, all the way to, you know, serving at a soup kitchen or whatever that might look like? But sometimes it's hard to see Him. Sometimes what's around us doesn't look like Jesus. And I think that that's an important thing to press into.[00:07:00]

It just is reminding me of this story that somebody was telling me over dinner. Randy Rous, actually from LifeTeen, he was telling this story. We

were out for dinner years ago, and he was talking about this guy, this journalist, who was wanting to interview Mother Teresa. And she said, you know, if you'd like to interview me, you just need to come here and be with us and be with the sisters for awhile.

And I don't think that's what he bargained for. I was like, just open it, you know, let's get this over with. So he goes there and, and instead of talking to him right away, she's like, just has him start serving the poor that were there. And there was this one man who was like covered in sores and everything and she said, I'd like you to bath him. And he was like, oh, like gross. That was his initial reaction. Like he was just that, that was the honest thing going on. Like I'm not here to do this. I just want to like talk to you and get, you know, get what I want and then leave. And so he was, he was bathing this man and he, he was just so grossed out by the [00:08:00] whole process of it. But as it, as it was going on, there was one time that he looked like in this mirror, back at the, at the man in the bathtub and he saw Jesus there and he turned around and looked at him again, you know, just there was this transformation that started to occur while he was pouring himself out for this man.

And what started as being grossed out, turned into this like total tenderness of seeing that this man was Jesus there. And when he came downstairs, mother Teresa took one, look at him and said, you saw him, didn't you, you saw him? And she could just tell there was a transformation that had occurred and I'm like, she's such an incredible model of one who served Jesus in every single person that she met.

And so for me that, yeah, like almsgiving, instead of it just being like, we've been talking about another box to check like, oh, here's something I'm supposed to do in Lent, or let me give my tithe here or there, wherever it's a, how can I see Jesus and love him?[00:09:00]

In whatever it might be, you know, the poor, the widow, the little person on the floor, bawling their head off, having a tantrum, like whatever it might be. Can I see Jesus there? And, and so for me, yeah, I'm praying

about almsgiving this, this Lent is like, Lord, can you open my eyes to see you? Where can I see you? Where am I not seeing you? Yeah.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. Gosh, what you both have said is just gorgeous, and it is true because it opens up our whole realm besides giving “money” to a cause like, let me just write you a check or let me just kind of lend my name to whatever that is, whatever you need versus like an investment of self.

So true almsgiving is an investment of self, which is why you see, you know, Christ, when he's watching people put their tithes into the temple and they're giving from their excess and the widow gives two small coins and that she gave all she had. And that's really, when we talk about real almsgiving, like that's because it requires our presence.

It requires our love. It requires our hearts. It requires our vulnerability. It requires us going beyond ourselves. [00:10:00] Yeah, all of us have those narcissistic places where we're just, you know, self-absorbed and I was listening to Bob, Dr. Bob Schutz, give a recent teaching on marriage. He had given an Unveiled Retreat recently, and I was listening to the livestream of it. And he talked about communication versus coercion. So he talked about how most of us spend most of our life trying to get people to love us the way we want to be loved. And if you don't love me the way that I want to be loved, that I'm not, you know, if you don't do that, then I'm going to either get back at you or I'm going to withdraw my heart or whatever.

And he said that's or when we say you have to do this, or you must do this, or he's like that's coercion. And he said, it's very different. When we find ourselves in distress, where we find ourselves wanting to express a desire. To first of all, turn toward the Lord and allow him to speak to that place and then to go to somebody else and say, you know, this is my experience, or this is, this is what I would like.

And you're free. Like I just to give people the freedom to, to respond. And I was just thinking of how Christ doesn't ever coerce us. He's always inviting us. Like he truly communicates like heart to heart and

he's inviting us into the gift of self [00:11:00] and none of us like to be coerced either. Like we know inside, we're like, oh, I don't like that.

You know? And so the Lord is bringing us into the freedom and, and like that reality of, of almsgiving, of the places of all of our relationships, where we could...there's a million things where the Lord could invite us to, to be more present or to be more giving that it's not under coercion. It's true communication, which leads to communion, heart to heart, versus trying to get somebody to love me the way I want to be loved versus being present and give me the love that Christ offers, which we can only do when we're turned toward him.

Heather Khym: That's beautiful. I think the thing about tenderness is like, you know, it, it changes the disposition of just doing something to feeling it, to being invested in what's going on, you know, to allow ourselves to be moved by those around us. And sometimes that's painful. Sometimes it's uncomfortable. Sometimes we have so many guards up, but I think that's the beauty of this topic is that it's like, can we just look at like what those guards might be and why? Could we just look at why do we hesitate? [00:12:00] You know, in certain areas, like what is behind that? And I think that's the beautiful part of this book, Sister. You're always just going, can we just peek behind this a little bit more, a little bit more. It's such a beautiful invitation. Yeah. What are your thoughts Michelle?

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah, I agree. And we will actually probably touch on this more when we go into the bride section of the women identities, but I think John Paul II was so prophetic and prolific when he talks about tenderness and love and responsibility, and he says, tenderness is the ability to feel with, and for the whole person. He says tenderness is nothing but the expression of my deep attunement to the beauty and goodness, to the pain and sorrow to the whole subjective interior state of the other person and their uniqueness as God's beloved and my desire to express my closeness to them in a tangible way.

And I've sat with that quote for just over and over again. So what is the deep attunement like to really feel the other person, their state, and really to [00:13:00] call forth their beauty and truth and goodness, and who they are.

I was listening to a class, and it was Dr. Dan Siegel, who is a really renowned psychologist. And he was saying, we have such a gift to call people into who they truly are, not how they're behaving or acting. And the deep maturity of us, and he was talking about the best children thrive with parents that know their own story and can make sense of their own story because they have tenderness with themselves and therefore they can be tender with their children and not project their own stuff on their children.

Like, I was just thinking about God as a parent, and he doesn't project anything on us. He just receives everything about us and what a beauty it is, and to learn how to love people that way. And I didn't get to guess this, the older I get, the more I realize, like it is a school of love and you, we are just. We're all students beginning.

And we say that, and we've said it once again, many times on this podcast, but that we are, we, we learn how to love people. And I [00:14:00] love what Bob was saying, but I want you to love me like this, but do we take a step back and say, how does this person want to be loved? You know? And like, I think I should love them this way. And they should love me that way. Like, we are all narcissistic in some way, shape or form, but to study the other people in our lives and to ask the questions, the people that drive us freaking crazy, why? Like, what is it in them that is so hard to love? Cause it's usually something about myself that I don't like it, that it was reflective in them and not to avoid those places, but to go deeper into those places and say, all right, what the heck is it like, cause this person drives me freaking crazy, you know? Why?

Heather Khym: You know, Sister, I'm curious for you. I was just thinking, you know, like, um, because your vocation's so beautiful, but it, there is

obedience as a part of your vows that you take. And so you don't always get to choose where you are. In fact, often many times 99% of the time, you don't get to choose.

You have no choice and, and knowing what your [00:15:00] life was like before your vocation, where you could choose whatever, and you were choosing whatever you wanted, whatever moved you at that moment.

What has been the fruit that you've seen in your own life, as you've gone from a place of like, probably a more explicitly, like self-absorbed life into one where you really even have given up like your choices to serve other people.

And so you must find yourselves in situations where like you've talked about before you're serving at a school, all in, in this, you know, taking care of little kids or whatever, it might be all these different circumstances that I'm sure aren't comfortable. I mean many times, cause it's not where you'd want to go.

Like I get to often choose where I want to be and who I want to serve. Um, so what has that been like just as you've surrendered, even that to the Lord and you find yourself in all of these different places with different people. Yeah, what's the fruit that you've seen?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. That's a great question, friend. Our founder, Father James Flanagan would always say that you know, of the three vows we take of poverty, chastity, obedience people always think it's, chastity, that's the hardest, but he's like, it's [00:16:00] actually obedience because it's to truly lay your life down and to obey. That word comes from the word "obedire," which means to listen. And so I think for me, it's been tremendously maturing. It's, you know, it's the, it's the bond of love that you keep hitting up against that, that you can, you know, surrender yourself to more and more.

And like it's like having kids, right? It matures you, or like coming into relationship with somebody else. It matures you because it takes you beyond yourself. And, and not that you know, and in our community

say, for example, you're sent somewhere, you know, your superior will have a conversation with you about it so it's not like, you know, you can talk about that. But at the, you know, to borrow a cliched saying at the end of the day, you know, you will go trusting that your superior has a grace and an insight like that is the will of God for you. And I can honestly tell you that I have never erred a single time obeying. Ever. Even if it was something that I couldn't see what was happening or it wouldn't be my first choice or living in a certain place, like I don't really want to do that, but I've never...Now when I [00:17:00] look back, and I see it in my day-to-day life, just that the daily obedience to our schedule, that you don't always, you don't get to do whatever you want when you want to do it.

We have a prayer schedule. We have certain things in our life that we do, and I have never, ever regretted obedience. Has it been crucifying at times? Has it been very pruning at times? Yes. And the things that you say no to are hard at times, but it's, and I'm not saying this is like a pietistical way of saying it, but it's so you can give a greater yes.

So for me, the way to maturity in my life has been through the religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And I, I would not be the person I am today without it. It is true fruit. Christ is poor, chaste, and obedient, and he, he listened to Father. So that continual listening, even when it's purifying, it's, it's, it's so good and it's so important. And to me, that's a true hallmark of maturity, you know, can we, can we obey in maturity, in humility?

Heather Khym: Yeah. Beautiful. Michelle, like I think for us, like our obedience comes in a different way. [00:18:00] You know, it's like we, once we learn more about what is actually the call of our vocation, that there is a certain amount of submission that's involved.

And not that, that means that we, you know, are under someone's thumb or, you know, and I don't mean that just because we're women or whatever, but like there's a submission that is necessary to really

thrive in our vocation. Will I submit my desires before God, so that I can serve the other, to put the other first.

And I know for you and I both like that comes with a lot of challenges and difficulty as well, but I can say for, for myself, and I think he would say the same, that, that those areas that we've had to give more than we thought that we could have been incredibly beautiful for one. But they also are like places where I feel like very close to the Lord because it's like, I break my poverty, God, and then you bring yourself here.

And then all of a sudden, [00:19:00] my capacity to love another or to lay down my life goes far beyond what I think I could do. So I think it's just a reminder, you know, for all of us. And I need this reminder often that not, these things don't have to be, and they shouldn't be on our own power. It's really not going to bear the kind of fruit that we want is to open these places to say, Lord ultimately, I'm submitting to you to your plan, to your calling for where I am in this particular state of life, for you to bear the most fruit in me.

And I'm going to bring all the places of poverty that I have. And, um, how do you want me to love better those around me? And serve them.

Michelle Benzinger: I think it just always, for me, I think about going back to the parable of the loaves and the fishes. It's just my responsibility to surrender my loaves and fishes. It's not my job to multiply them. That is his job. I just surrender what is in my hands. And I think for me, it's also an idea of stewardship. The Lord has entrusted certain people and things to me. And like I was reading a document about work that the [00:20:00] church taught, and I was thinking, do I have good dominion over what the Lord has entrusted to me?

The Lord has given dominion over this home, over this family, over certain things. Do I steward that? Am I faithful in the little things to be faithful in the big things. I think now, even with the presence of social media, we have all this people like, what's your platform, what's your platform like, and let's grow this, but are you faithful with what is right in front of you, you know?

And the Lord will add whatever way, shape, or form that he wants you to communicate his. He will take care of that, but it's...what is faithfulness, you know what he is calling us to steward, because I know when I get before the Lord, it is not going to be about followers or whatever. It's going to be the Lord saying, "did you love these people that I entrusted to you? And did you love them?"

I was just even thinking about, we mentioned earlier, Chris and I went away for a couple of days and I was just looking at him and, um, we were sitting on the dock and I was just thinking like, one of the things that I do want it to say is "She loved him well." [00:21:00] That's important you know, in all of her thoughts and she loved him well, and just. That's that's something, you know, like a desire of my heart because the Lord put it there. And that I was thinking if our marriages are supposed to be a reflection of the church and Jesus, do I, and not that we have to be perfect because no one is perfect, but the Lord, but that we do have to aim for holiness and wholeness and I want to grow.

Like sister said, it's a lot of maturing. It's maturity, you know, and this learning, like I realized about say I'm about to be 50 years old, but there's still so many areas I love like a child, very childless, not childlike childish and the Lord's like, okay, girl, it's time to grow up in these areas.

And I was like, when do you realize that you're actually the adult in the room? And the Lord as we've echoed before, he's so kind and tender with us, just like, yeah, it's maturing love. It's a beautiful love. [00:22:00]

Heather Khym: And I do think there's an aspect about sin, Sister, that I would love for you to talk about a little bit that we do have to look at.

I mean, we don't talk about it a lot. Like we talked about wounds a lot, but often they're closely connected either the sin of others or the sin within ourselves and Lent is a time to look within ourselves. And you were talking about at the end here, the spiritual works of mercy and admonishing the center and you know, all of that stuff, but I'm like, what, what is going on within our own hearts?

I think often we're like very acceptable of our own sin, easier to point out on in the other, you know?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Oh gosh. Yeah. I mean the places where, yeah, where we miss the mark, where sin is ruptured and we're sin causes wounds. It does cause wounds. It causes wounds within us. It causes wounds within other people.

And sin is a real thing, and it has a very destructive power, and I'm not sure I know it in my own life. I've had sins in my own life that I did not want to confess. And they eat you alive, whether you realize it or not, they [00:23:00] eat you alive and they do all kinds of damage. And so the confession of our sin every day, we talk about examination of conscience, but the confession of the places with, you know, where we can sit with the Lord and say, okay, Lord, where have I failed today?

Like where have I really, you know, either sinned in omission or commission or what I've done or what I failed to do. Like all the things in my thoughts, like what that does is it helps open our hearts, like you're saying Michelle, like to name those places of our hearts, to open up the storehouse of places where darkness has dominion.

Like, you know, forget about the kingdom of God. Where does darkness have dominion? And darkness has dominion in my life at any place that is, is, uh, held in darkness that has yet to be confessed in the Lord. And so that, that daily understanding of gosh, where am I missing the mark so that the Lord can come and bring me into communion there, but also that he can restore us.

And I think that's one of the best things about our, one of the best things about the sacraments is this is an objective... This is an objective experience that we're having of our sins being forgiven. That where the enemy might come back to say, you know, you did this and you did this. [00:24:00] And yeah, I may have done that in the past, but with the sacrament of confession, when the priest prays that prayer of absolution, which is the merciful heart of Christ, he wills to remember our sin no more, and it no longer exists before the Lord.

And there's, we talk a lot about therapy on this podcast, and we even talked a lot about the sacraments in prayer, but just to reiterate, there is nothing that will ever replace a good confession. Absolutely nothing, no counseling session, no prayer experience. There is nothing in our life that will replace a good holy sacramental confession.

And that is, I would say on behalf of all of us to urge our listeners. If you're Catholic, please. Please go to confession this Lent, please go. Because that has the power. It has the exercising power to cast out the dominion of darkness and bring it to God's marvelous light and to order us in a way that nothing else does.

And the priest is not going to pass out. I know we've all had experiences with priests who have been unkind and I, I don't want to dismiss that. And that's very difficult. But just to encourage you to please, please go, because ultimately it's the [00:25:00] merciful heart of Christ that's forgiving you. And because that's very, it is, it becomes a cancer. It becomes very toxic in our life. And man, a regular confession is it's trans...it's priceless.

Heather Khym: Yeah and in those places, in those tender places. I mean, I remember being young and having a priest yell at me when I went to confession, you know? And I'm like, as an, as I'm older, now I can say to myself, like the worst thing would be that I let that man's sin because that was the man, not really the priests acting there to let that man's sin come between me and the Lord. Because that's really the loss there. Like if I don't go to confession because of him, the loss is between me and the Lord, it does nothing for that person who wrecked everything in that moment, you know?

So it doesn't dismiss the pain, but maybe there's someone that you can make an appointment with so that it's not random, you know, maybe a priest that you trust or that you know is kind of reveals the character of God in a certain way. But yeah, I agree. I think there's a tolerance for sin that we [00:26:00] have in our life that as Christians, if we're following Jesus, those things have to be looked at like, if we're drinking too much

wine too often and going, oh, you know, that's just part...and it's more of a joke than anything. Hey friend, you know, like maybe it's time to look at that and just say, am I really following Jesus here?

And there's many, many other areas. Like we're not going to get into it right now because we're coming to the end of our podcast. But I think it's worth saying, and I would love for us to keep talking about this, the rest of Lent, just like, how do we address the places of sin in our life? That we've become way too tolerant of, because I think that in tying it into our theme today of almsgiving and having to be faced with our own, self-centeredness, like, that is a place of self-centeredness where we go, oh, this is acceptable.

I'm choosing. To say to myself, this is acceptable. And my opinion about this is more important than God's law and, and his laws are made in love, you know, so that we can truly be free.

Michelle Benzinger: And I think there's something about. Taking...like I love [00:27:00] John Paul II when he says love *and* responsibility. We have to take responsibility for our own sinfulness.

We have to take responsibility for the areas...we have to become self-aware. But also I think we have to allow other people, we have the beautiful, amazing sacrament of reconciliation and confession, but also who are the people that hold us accountable in our life. Like my husband tagged me on this. He's like, you don't let me hold you accountable in this area, you know?

And I could say, but you hurt my feelings, but really it's an area of immaturity in me. You know you're right, you know, and my spiritual director tagged me on something last week. He said, okay, we agree to this. And you did not, what is the block? And I could make a hundred excuses. And they could sound pretty darn good, but I was like, you're right.

I don't have it. But it was an area of pride. It was an area of pride because I wanted to downplay this area, you know? And it wasn't like

this blatant area of sin, but it could be, it could become a, you can stumble over a little rock, just as much as a boulder. You know what I mean? It was just like, okay, like, I [00:28:00] need to look at this.

And so what is it, who holds you accountable? You know, and who says like, okay, this isn't...when we're saying admonished sinner, you know, when you want someone to do it, that is in love and that, you know, loves you, you know, and not shame you, but also there's a people that say, all right, call you on your stuff.

Like, you know, girl you being bratty. We need those people in our lives. That's what community is for also.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. And all of that is almsgiving. Like it really is, you know, it really, all of it is like going to confession and confessing our sins, allowing the Lord to order our loves. All, all of that is almsgiving.

That it not only benefits us, but it benefits everybody else too. I mean, I mentioned if the whole world went to confession and the whole world was, you know, interested in the places day-to-day where, you know, we were all, you know, the ways we fail in love. Oh my gosh, it'd be such a different.

Myself included Yeah. You know? Yeah, yeah, indeed. Well, we know we could go [00:29:00] on forever, but this is such good stuff. And it'll be interesting to kind of see what for each one of us, what the Lord stirs in our heart this week about giving alms and about the place he wants to bring us in true communion, true communication, the truth of the gift of self and just to gently let the Lord do that in those places. And we can thoroughly, you know, the Lord might inspire something in your heart this week, or like, all right, this, this needs to go, or this needs to come in. Like, let's let him do that. You know, let's let them do that. So

Heather Khym: Amen.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yes, Michelle, would you like to share your one thing for this fourth week of a Lent?

Michelle Benzinger: Yes. My one thing is actually two books as usual. They are..one is, I'm going to butcher the name of this, but it is: God is Beauty, and it is a beautiful book retreat for artists from John Paul II that Christopher West and my good friend, Dr. Sarah Maples, and a couple of the others from Theology of the Body Institute put together and it was a retreat they had translated into English just recently from Polish [00:30:00] that John Paul II did for artists for Lenten retreat, actually. Wow. And it is rocking my world. It is so beautiful and so good. And it just has all the areas that I love art, beauty, goodness. My good friend, Dr. Sarah Maples wrote a beautiful chapter in it too.

It's just lovely. And I love it. And as we were talking about the other book, Sister was...I'm listening to this book on tape and it has, like you were saying Sister earlier, previous listening to the Hobbit...the girl that narrates it has the best English accent and does all the voices and characters and my husband and I were listening to it together the other day and I'm like, I think God loves English and Irish accents the best because they are awesome. They are beautiful and they are awesome and Scottish and all of those, but it is, uh, Patty Callahan. It's called Once Upon a Wardrobe, and it is about a little boy and his older sister. And the little boy is eight years old or nine years old and [00:31:00] dying.

And he wants to know if Narnia is real. And his sister is a student at Oxford university at the time of CS Lewis. You know, it's a fiction book, but, and so the CS Lewis and his brother befriend this little girl and help them discover is Narnia real. And it is such a beautiful book about wonder and imagination and mystery.

I mean, there are parts where I'm just bawling, but it's very magical. And she's also the author that wrote, um, becoming Mrs. Lewis about CS Lewis. She's just a really great author. You know, it's yes. I just fully

recommend this book. And so it is just one of those ones that make you yes. Just say, oh, okay. This is good. This was really good.

Heather Khym: Yeah. Awesome. I need to make more time for that, for stories. I just, that that's striking me as you both were talking about the stories the last couple of weeks. That's so good. Um, my one thing is a recipe: [00:32:00] Zucchini Pecan Muffins. Guys. It's so good. I mean, to me, it's my favorite muffin right now.

I'll text it to you. I'll text it to you. Yeah, it's so good. I mean, I'm just saying if I could toot my own horn, this is really good. So the next time you are having friends over, or you want to bake something for, you know, kids after school or you're having a little group meeting like this is a good one. So it's going to be on the show notes.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Maybe you can do it for Abiding Together, your Abiding Together meeting next week. I could just bring, yeah. Okay. That sounds good.

Heather Khym: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So anyway, it's in the show notes, check it out and try it. You won't be disappointed unless you have an allergy to pecans. You would definitely be disappointed. Yeah. Or like a gluten allergy. So, you know, it's, it's good. Do your substitutions wherever you might need to. Sister, what's your one thing?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, I also have a recipe. And so I'm just all about soup lately. I love soup. And so my [00:33:00] recipe for y'all is a homemade vegetarian chili. So if you're looking for something Hardy and warm, but doesn't have meat in it, maybe you're trying to stay away from meat for lent, or maybe you want to make it on a Friday like to feed everybody. You will absolutely love this homemade Vegetarian Chili. So it's very yummy. You can put meat in it, if you want, you can put ground beef or ground turkey. That's also another option for chili. I tried it with ground turkey a few times. It just has a different flavor to it, but it gives it like a lighter kind of a lighter version that's not so...chili is good, but it can be so heavy, but this recipe is totally

vegetarian, and I think it will bless you and your family. Make some cornbread with it and you will be good to go. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Well, thank you dear friends for coming along with us on the journey and the call that the Lord is, um, giving to each one of us to give alms, right? And it comes from him. So we don't ever have to try to figure it out ourselves. He's going to give that to us and he's going to allow us to, to give that to all those around us. So thank you so much for joining us this week until next week would be Abiding Together. God bless you.

Thank you so much for listening to this week's [00:34:00] episode.

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