

## **The Journey of Lent**

### ***Practices for a holy Lent:***

Every Ash Wednesday we are invited to enter into the season, or rather the journey, of a holy Lent. We are reminded that the reason for taking this journey is to renew our commitment to a life of repentant faith.

This requires growing in the awareness of our spiritual poverty, our deep hunger and thirst for what God alone can provide. This is done by paying attention to the ways we try to fill this space with things other than our relationship with God. It also involves embracing a lifestyle of ongoing celebration for the spiritual riches that are already ours in Jesus, poured out to us through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we return to our heart's true home again and again by faith. This is repentant faith.

Lent is not simply traveling with Jesus to the Cross, it is the journey of the Cross. A journey intended to draw us into deeper intimacy with Him, as we let go of those things that bind us to selfishness.

The practices the Church commends us to use on the journey are listed below with a brief description. These are not our navigational tools, but rather the gear that help us keep in step with our guide, the Holy Spirit. A personal guide, familiar with the terrain of the journey, is always better than a map or GPS.

### ***Self-examination and Repentance:***

Self-examination involves thoughtfully looking at the pattern of life we have received in Jesus, and to honestly assess how we are doing in staying close to Him. Three possibilities to use for this ongoing assessment are the Ten Commandments, 1 Corinthians 13, or the Great Litany. This examination must not lead to self-condemnation, but rather to accept the invitation to return back to Jesus to receive forgiveness and the grace needed to stay close.

### ***Prayer:***

We are called to pray without ceasing, yet there are many practices that enable us to live out this principle. At its essence, prayer is simply to be in God's presence and to have a conversation. Prayer is not about getting things from God, or a duty, but rather its the privilege of a relationship. Whatever form of prayer we use, the one element it should always include is a healthy dose of thanksgiving for all of God's goodness and loving kindness to us.

### ***Fasting:***

Historically fasting has been associated with going without food, drink, or both, for a period of time in order to be more open and present to God. The goal is usually to hear God more clearly and to better be able to live out His will. There are many other ways we may fast with the same goal. We may choose to give up some form of entertainment, food, leisure, technology or practice in our lives. People often find fasting most fruitful when they couple letting go of something with taking on a spiritual practice that draws them closer to God.

### ***Alms-giving:***

We may think of alms-giving as one way to live into the command to love our neighbor. It can help us break free from our consumer culture's focus on having our wants met by sharing the overflow of our blessings with those in need. I've heard of some who have given up eating out for lunch during Lent, or stop buying Starbucks, and giving the money they save to a mission agency or local charity.

### ***Reading and Meditation on God's Holy Word:***

This principle can also be lived out in multiple ways. Here are a couple: Read a short passage of Scripture along with a devotional commentary. Read or listen, to the Daily Office passages. Meditation in the Christian tradition has multiple strands. Biblical meditation includes reflecting on a short passage from the Bible (even a single verse) slowly, and prayerfully, like a cow chewing the cud. In this way, we can begin to hear from God in a fashion that allows His truth to sink from our head into our heart. Many say that prayer is our talking to God, while reading and meditating on the Word, is listening to God talk to us.

### **RESOURCES:**

During this journey of Lent try using the following resources to aid you in living the way of the Cross.

### **SELF-EXAMINATION and REPENTANCE**

#### *The Great Litany*

This is also a great guide for praying for others. Can be downloaded online: [Great Litany](#)

#### *The Examen*

This is a spiritual practice from St. Ignatius that is used to prayerfully go over the day under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It helps us see when we have sought distance from God, as well as to give thanks for when we have been aware of His nearness. *Last page*

## **PRAYER, BIBLE READING, and MEDITATION**

*Trinity School for Ministry* provides an online devotional commentary that uses the Daily Office readings from the 1979 Prayer Book.

<http://www.tsm.edu/lentendevotional/>

*Mission St. Clare* provides a daily audio of Morning Prayer with the Psalm New Testament, and Gospel reading from the 79 Prayer Book. They also have an audio for Noonday and Compline.

<http://www.missionstclare.com/english/spoken/spoken.html>

*The Trinity Mission* offers an audio of Morning and Evening Prayer with all the readings from the Anglican Church in North America. The ACNA has returned to the historic Bible reading plan for the Daily Office, so the readings are considerably longer.

<http://thetrinitymission.org>

*The Lent Project* is an interactive online devotional experience produced by Biola University Center for Christianity, Culture, and the Arts. Each day there is a piece of artwork, music, and poetry along with a passage of Scripture and a reflection that ties them all together. The goal is to engage our senses as we pray and encounter God through His Word. You can sign up to have it delivered daily to your inbox.

<http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/>

*Pray as You Go* is a website (and an App) of the Jesuits in Britain. There are six days of audio prayer a week following the contemplative Bible reading tradition of St. Ignatius. The aim is to inhabit the passage being read and to engage with it. It begins with a beautiful piece of music, the reading of a passage, some reflection questions, the reading of the passage again, and then closing prayer.

The site also contains a Lent Retreat, as well as several other guided forms of meditation. In addition there are numerous audios of the Examen.

<https://pray-as-you-go.org>

*Clergy Devotions from Kern Deanery and Diocese of San Joaquin* On occasion the local Anglican clergy, along with others in the diocese, will write short devotions for Lent based upon the Daily Office passages. The years when this is done, the devotions are available in the church or on our website.

## Daily Examen

Set aside a few moments each day in a quiet place. This is often best (whenever possible) at a consistent time of day.

1. Start by becoming aware of God's presence—invite the Holy Spirit of God to be with you and to guide your reflections.
2. Give thanks to the Lord for all the good things in life, all that has happened, all that you have, family, friends, community; his presence, etc.—gratitude is foundational to a healthy relationship.
3. Look back over the day (paying attention to emotions which may give clues of the day's high and low points). Considering your thoughts, feelings, desires, words, actions... ask yourself:

When did I most experience God's presence? When did I listen for his voice?  
When did I cooperate with his will?

When did I feel most distant from God? When did I resist listening for his voice?  
When did I least cooperate with his will?

4. What is the most pressing issue(s) in your life that hold(s) you back from growing closer to Christ? With God's grace, resolve to let God forgive, heal and transform you. Inviting him into all of the areas of your life, give thanks, ask his forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, etc. Seek amendment of life if necessary.
5. Prayerfully, bring to God the events of the day to come, asking for the grace to walk in faithfulness to his leading presence.

*from TSM Lenten Devotional*