

for Lent 2017

SACRED
SPACE

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Prayer from the Irish Jesuits





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Sacred Space for Lent 2017

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The Presence of God

Bless all who worship you, almighty God,
from the rising of the sun to its setting:
from your goodness enrich us,
by your love inspire us,
by your Spirit guide us,
by your power protect us,
in your mercy receive us,
now and always.

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How to Use This Booklet

During each week of Lent, begin by reading the “Something to think and pray about each day this week.” Then proceed through “The Presence of God,” “Freedom,” and “Consciousness” steps to prepare yourself to hear the Word of God in your heart. In the next step, “The Word,” turn to the Scripture reading for each day of the week. Inspiration points are provided if you need them. Then return to the “Conversation” and “Conclusion” steps. Follow this process every day of Lent.

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March 1—March 4

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

Desired into Existence

I maintain that God—out of the abundance of divine relational life, not any need for us—desires humans into existence for the sake of friendship. This thesis may sound strange, because it runs counter to much teaching about God. To be honest, I questioned it myself when I first began to think it through. But over the years, as my own relationship with God has deepened and I have listened to people talk about how God relates to them, I have become convinced that the best analogy for the relationship God wants with us is friendship.

—William A. Barry, SJ, *Lenten Meditations*

The Presence of God

To be present is to arrive as one is and open up to the other.

At this instant, as I arrive here, God is present waiting for me.

God always arrives before me, desiring to connect with me

even more than my most intimate friend.

I take a moment and greet my loving God.

Freedom

I am free. When I look at these words in writing, they seem to create in me a feeling of awe. Yes, a wonderful feeling of freedom. Thank you, God.

Consciousness

To be conscious about something is to be aware of it. Dear Lord, help me to remember that you gave me life. Thank you for the gift of life.

Teach me to slow down, to be still and enjoy the pleasures created for me. To be aware of the beauty that surrounds me. The marvel of mountains, the calmness of lakes, the fragility of a flower petal. I need to remember that all these things come from you.

The Word

The Word of God comes to us through the Scriptures. May the Holy Spirit enlighten my mind and heart to respond to the Gospel teachings. (Please turn to the Scripture on the following pages. Inspiration points are there should you need them. When you are ready, return here to continue.)

Conversation

I begin to talk to Jesus about the piece of Scripture I have just read. What part of it strikes a chord in me? Perhaps the words of a friend—or some story I have heard recently—will slowly rise to the surface in my consciousness. If so, does the story throw light on what the Scripture passage may be trying to say to me?

Conclusion

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen.

Wednesday 1st March

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

Jesus said, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. . . . And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

- At this time of year, the church invites us to test our inner freedom—concerning food and drink, pornography, complaining, gossiping, and so on. What habits make you hard to live with? Lent is about regaining control of our own lives, especially in those areas that damage other people.
- Do I have a secret room in which I meet God? Am I happy to have God see all that I do? The kingdom of God becomes visible through my public religious practices and also through my private works of charity and acts of faith.

Thursday 2nd March

Luke 9:22–25

Jesus said to his disciples, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?”

- *Deny yourself and take up your cross daily.* Lord, I used to think this meant looking for mortifications. You have taught me that my cross is myself,

my ego, the pains in my body, my awkwardness, my mistakes. To follow you is to move beyond ego trips. It means coping with the business of life without trampling on others or making them suffer.

- The Gospel is unambiguous: suffering and self-displacement are the hallmarks of a disciple. Jesus goes the way of the cross. He does not hoard his life, even though living must have had a special quality for him. I am called not to hoard my life but to live generously.

Friday 3rd March

Matthew 9:14–15

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

- Spend some time each day allowing the joy of God to fill your heart. Spend some time mourning with him, as joy is lost for so many. Any fasting is to remind us that the Lord of all joy suffers in his people, perhaps in people who are near to us. Prayer brings us near to others and near to God.

- Here Jesus uses the notion of fasting to reveal that the God whom the Jews hunger for has arrived. Rejoicing, not mourning, is the appropriate response to the presence of divine mercy revealed in Jesus. Lord, this Lent may my prayer and my fasting reveal my inner hunger for you.

Saturday 4th March

Luke 5:27–32

After this Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up, left everything, and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

- Whom Jesus eats and drinks with is a distraction from what his mission is—to call us into a change of life. When we are focused on Jesus, we can eat and drink with anyone. We can invite anyone into our prayer and allow prayer to be a time of healing and forgiveness.

- Where are the Levis in my world? The drug pushers, greedy CEOs, abusers, rapists, those who cheat on taxes or social welfare. Lord, these are the sick who need you as physician. How can I help you reach out to them?

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