

for Lent 2019

# SACRED SPACE

from the website [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)

Prayer from the Irish Jesuits





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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.

SAMPLE

## **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.

## March 6–March 9

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

Every Christian can become a witness to the risen Jesus. And his or her witness is all the more credible, the more it shines through a life lived by the Gospel, a joyful, courageous, gentle, peaceful, merciful life. Instead, if a Christian gives in to ease, vanity, and selfishness, if he or she becomes deaf and blind to the question of “resurrection” of many brothers and sisters, how can [that person] communicate the living Jesus? How can the Christian communicate the freeing power of the living Jesus and his infinite tenderness?

Listen to Jesus. He is the Savior: follow him. To listen to Christ, in fact, entails *taking up the logic of his Pascal Mystery*, setting out on the journey with him to make of oneself a gift of love to others, in docile obedience to the will of God, with an attitude of interior freedom and of detachment from worldly things. One must, in other words, be willing to lose one’s very life (cf. Mark 8:35), by giving it up so that all men might be saved; thus, we will meet in eternal happiness. The path to Jesus always leads us to happiness—don’t forget it! Jesus’ way always leads us to happiness. There will always be a cross, trials

in the middle, but at the end we are always led to happiness. Jesus does not deceive us; he promised us happiness and will give it to us if we follow his ways.

—Pope Francis, *Embracing the Way of Jesus*

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## **The Presence of God**

“Be still and know that I am God!” Lord, your words lead us to the calmness and greatness of your presence.

## **Freedom**

“In these days, God taught me as a schoolteacher teaches a pupil” (Saint Ignatius). I remind myself that there are things God has to teach me yet, and I ask for the grace to hear them and let them change me.

## **Consciousness**

How am I really feeling? Lighthearted? Heavyhearted? I may be very much at peace, happy to be here. Equally, I may be frustrated, worried, or angry. I acknowledge how I really am. It is the real me whom the Lord loves.

## **The Word**

God speaks to each of us individually. I listen attentively to hear what he is saying to me. Read the text a few times; then listen. (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**

Do I notice myself reacting as I pray with the word of God? Do I feel challenged, comforted, angry? Imagining Jesus sitting or standing by me, I speak out my feelings, as one trusted friend to another.

### **Conclusion**

I thank God for these moments we have spent together and for any insights I have been given concerning the text.

## **Wednesday 6th 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.”

- What motivates me, deepest down? Do I act solely to please God? Jesus gives hypocrites a hard time. They pretend to be what they are not; they are actors, performing behind their masks. When am I most likely to put up a pretense? Do I ever catch myself telling small lies to give others a better impression of myself?
- I must be content to be who I am. My deepest identity is not the one I create for myself but the identity given me by God. I am the beloved of God, and always will be. That is enough. The important person in my life must be not myself, nor others, but only God who sees in secret. God also knows my secret: when everything is said and done, I am infinitely loved!

## **Thursday 7th 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?”

- At the start of Lent, Jesus puts before us the central events of his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Jesus states clearly that his project to save the world will end in disaster for himself. I sit with him in silence and with gratitude that he does not simply give up and abandon humankind to its malice.
- Let me also chat with him about the things I endure. He is not saying that suffering is good, but that I can either accept it patiently or try to reject it. He looks hard at me and says, “You could spend your life just looking after yourself and trying to avoid pain and hurt. Or you can embrace the world with love and risk failure, betrayal, disappointment from those you try to serve. Of course you will get hurt, but an eternal blessing will be yours at the end.” I respond: “Lord, let me live my life as you lived yours.” He thanks me.

## **Friday 8th March**

*Matthew 9:14–15*

Then the disciples of John came to Jesus, 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.”

- John the Baptist and his disciples have their doubts about Jesus. Devout Jews observed regular obligatory fasts and would also undertake private fasting, by way of praying for God's salvation and hastening the coming of the kingdom. We can often feel like John's disciples, confused and unsure about what to do. The divisions in the Church upset us. But Jesus is saying: "With my coming, a wedding has started; a new creation is under way; be joyful!"
- Jesus wanted to celebrate and socialize with everybody, especially the outcasts, the prodigals, the sinners, to let them know that in him the joyful time of salvation had indeed come. I must stop living in no-man's-land. I must wake up—the Savior of the world has come, and I must join him.

## **Saturday 9th March**

*Luke 5:27–32*

After this he 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.”

- Tax collectors were despised: they were social and religious outcasts. Why then does Jesus choose Levi out of all possible candidates? Because he is determined to break down dramatically the barriers that fragment human community. Who are the tax collectors in my world?
- The banquet indicates table fellowship; eating and drinking together shows that the guests accept one another. Since Jesus is the main guest, we are shown that if we want to be with him at the table, we must accept the companionship of people we have despised. At the Eucharist, Jesus invites everyone to participate, not simply as individuals but as fellow disciples who are both sinners and forgiven. Do I complain about this, in words, or silently in my heart?