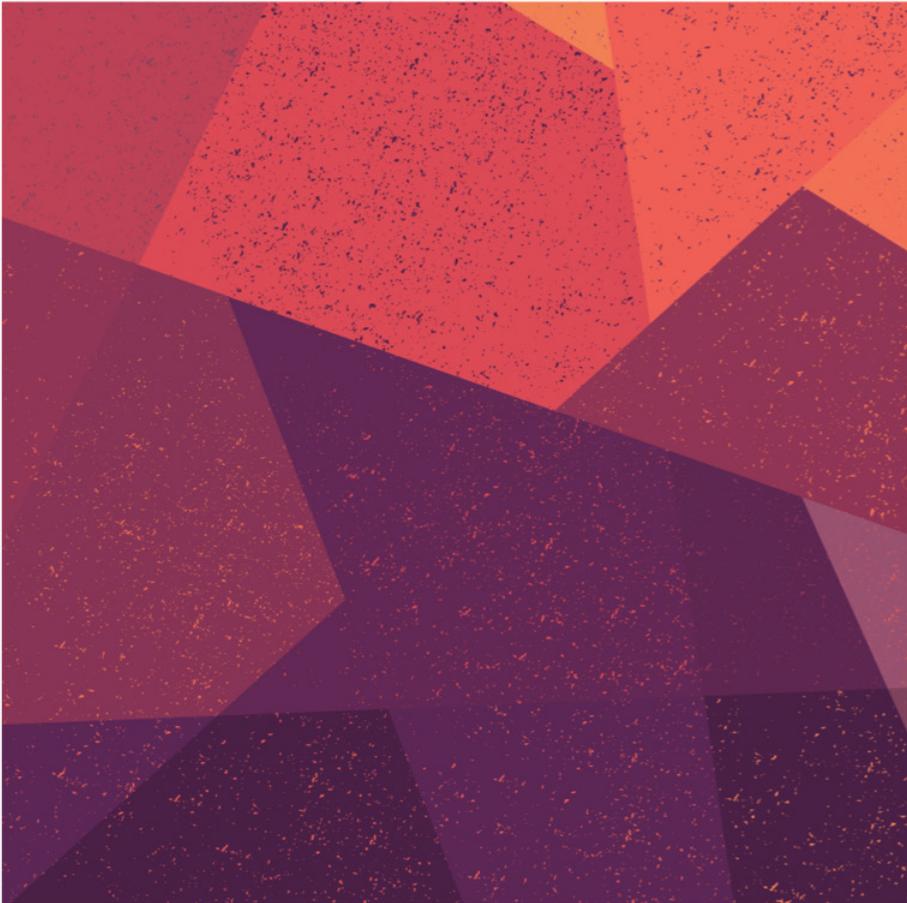


THE RULE OF LIFE



FASTING & HOSPITALITY
Lent / March 2020



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Name: _____

“...the liturgical traditions of the Church, all its cycles and services, exist, first of all, in order to help us recover the vision and the taste of that new life which we so easily lose and betray, so that we may repent and return to it... It is through her liturgical life that the Church reveals to us something of that which ‘the ear has not heard, the eye has not seen, and what has not yet entered the heart of man, but which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ And in the center of that liturgical life, as its heart and climax, as the sun whose rays penetrate everywhere, stands [the Easter mystery].”

— **ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN**

THE LITURGICAL YEAR — A REVIEW

At Grace Pasadena, we are committed to forming habits and practices— a Rule of Life — that root us in the love of God in Jesus Christ. To that end, we’re spending each month of this ministry year considering and practicing different spiritual disciplines. Since all of March falls in Lent, we’ll focus on two practices associated with the season: fasting and hospitality. Before we dive in, we’ll review the liturgical calendar and Lent’s place in it.

We follow the liturgical year because it reminds us that the people of God live by a different rhythm, one that is shaped first and foremost by the love of God in Jesus Christ and his Good News. Developed over many years, the church year is divided into different seasons based on different aspects of the life of Jesus Christ. Each season draws us into deeper contemplation of our Savior’s love and how he is manifesting his love in the here and now. Each season has its own themes, symbols and colors. In short:

Advent. This is the season of *promise*. We spend time anticipating the coming of God in Jesus Christ. We look back on the promises of God to send a Messiah *and* we look forward to the fulfillment of Jesus’s promise to come back and set all things right once and for all. There are four Sundays of Advent, and the color is purple.

Christmas. This is a season of *incarnation*. Spanning twelve days, we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ and the in-breaking of his light in our world. In his coming, we see that God does not remain far from us or despise us, but comes to us as one of us in order to embrace us with his loving grace. The colors of the season are white and gold.

Epiphany. This is a season of *revelation*. We remember how Jesus showed us who he is through his life, words, relationships and miracles, and that he is indeed the light to all the nations of the world. There are seven to eight Sundays of the season. The color is green.

Lent. This is a season of *crucifixion*. We remember how Jesus suffered humiliation and death on a cross for our sake because of our sin. This is a somber season, but one that prepares us for the joy of Easter. The season is forty days long; it begins on Ash Wednesday and ends with Holy Week. The color is purple through most of the season. Black is often used on the final days of Lent.

Easter. This is the season of *resurrection*. We celebrate Jesus’s rising from the dead and his victory over all sin and death. This is the party of all parties, and so the season is fifty days long. The colors are gold and white.

Pentecost. This is the season of *the Holy Spirit*. After Jesus ascended to heaven, Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to live in us. This is the longest of the seasons, and in this time, we turn our attention to the ways the Holy Spirit orders our lives with the love of Jesus to prepare us for his return. The season is often called “Ordinary Time” from the Latin word for “order.” The color for Pentecost Sunday is red and the green is used the rest of the time.

LENTEN SELF-EXAMINATION

The forty days of Lent is a long season of preparation for the even longer celebration of Easter. Given the limited space of this guide, there isn’t enough room for a detailed explanation of Lent. If you’re curious about the origins of Lent and the benefits of keeping Lent, please see the handout “*On Keeping a Holy Lent*” by Craig Higgins. (Copies are available on the City Groups Table and on our website.)

For the purposes of this guide, it’s sufficient to say that Lent calls us to prepare for Easter through repentance. Though Christians are called to repentance at all times, the Church, in her wisdom, sets aside certain times of the year to bring particular attention to it.

Repentance is a re-orientation. To repent is to turn away from sin and towards God and his love (Mat. 3:2; Acts 3:19). With Easter as the goal, Lent invites us to turn away from news that is anything less than the Good News of Jesus’s death and resurrection. As we re-orient our lives, we bear the fruit of repentance (Mat. 3:8). That is our lives increasingly testify to God’s love in our words, attitudes and actions.

An important furnace for re-orientation is self-examination, or laying our lives bare before the Holy Spirit (Psalm 139:23). As Craig Higgins explains, “*Lent is a time for focusing on the heart, a time for asking questions about our spiritual health.*” Higgins offers the following useful questions:

- What are my characteristic sins, and how can I work and pray for change?
- What idols have captured my imagination and desires so that my love for the living God has grown cold?
- In what ways is my devotion to Christ and his church less than wholehearted?

Such self-examination helps us take an honest look at our lives and ways we are either moving towards or away from God. It helps us see the ways our beliefs line up with our words, actions and attitudes. It helps us see all the dark places of our hearts that God wants to dispel with his light and love. Lent, and self-examination in general, can be difficult and ground shaking if we lose sight of the fact that God’s intention is to bring new life and joy. It can crush us if Easter is not in sight. Christian self-reflection is not an act of shame or self-destruction, but one that leads to new freedom and life.

LENTEN FASTING

Self-examination is tied to two other important practices: fasting and hospitality, or self-denial and self-giving. These two habits are linked together and complete one another.

Fasting is not always a strictly spiritual exercise. Hunger strikes have been used to protest political injustice. Fasting has also long been

“SOME HAVE EXALTED RELIGIOUS FASTING BEYOND ALL SCRIPTURE AND REASON; AND OTHERS HAVE UTTERLY DISREGARDED IT. —JOHN WESLEY

“[FRIENDSHIP] IS THE MOST IMPORTANT, LEAST EXAMINED AREA OF HUMAN LIFE.”

—ROBERT BELLAH

used for health reasons, and this kind of fasting is having a moment. Along with eating clean and going keto, many health enthusiasts have latched onto fasting. The thinking goes that limiting food on a periodic basis can unlock all kinds of human potential including weight loss and clarity of mind. The science is compelling.

Neither of these modes of fasting are wrong, but the motivations are different than Christian fasting. The hunger strike seeks after power, while dietary fasting seeks after better version of one's self. To a degree, both modes are about the self. *Christian fasting is about self-denial.*

In Scripture, we see different patterns of fasting. One is a total fast, which restricts all food and liquids, except water. Another is a partial fast, which restricts only some kinds of food or liquids. Either way, the purpose of fasting is to create new room in our lives for God. When we fast, we intentionally deprive ourselves of things, actions and attitudes that make us feel self-sufficient and self-protected. We give up power and any illusions of being good enough on our own. Fasting puts us in a place—a wilderness place—in which our only recourse is to throw ourselves into the hands of God. The very dynamic of fasting is re-orientation from self to God. In other words, fasting puts us in a place where we can confront our sin and hear with fresh ears the Good News that Jesus is our only comfort in life and death and that we belong to him.

Lenten fasting can take different shapes. We recommend fasting by giving up a food, beverage, or activity that you often turn to for

comfort. Perhaps this is chocolate, chips, beer or wine. Perhaps it is watching TV or spending time on social networks. As you consider what to abstain from, you may feel the need to abstain from more than one thing. Another way to fast is to give up one meal a day, especially if you're in the habit of eating out. If you would like to practice a full day of complete fasting (no food, but water/juice allowed), we recommend doing so on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday. These are the traditional days for full fasting for many Christians around the world.

Since we do not live the Christian life alone, consider fasting with your City Group, friends, roommates or family. In Scripture, we see individuals fasting as well as entire communities fasting together (2 Sam 1; Acts 14:3). Is there something you can all give up together in order to be more deeply rooted in God together?

As you fast, keep in mind the following:

- If you have any history with eating disorders or have a complicated relationship with food or dieting, fasting from food may not be wise. Find another way to fast that will cultivate freedom and joy. As always, if you need help in this area, Grace Pasadena is here for you. Please reach out.
- Sundays are never fast days; they are *feast* days. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and we celebrate that fact every Sunday, even during Lent. (Lent is forty days because we don't count Sundays.) So, take a break from fasting on Sundays and remember with joy that our salvation is a gracious gift from God!

- Fasting is never about the strength of our will power or personal piety. That is to say, failure is part of our fasting experience and fasting is never about the self — it is re-orientation to God and his steadfast love. Whenever you fail, resist the temptation to condemn yourself. Whenever you feel “successful” in your fast, resist the temptation to boast about your will power. Instead, turn to God and rejoice in his free grace and revel in the knowledge that God alone is your life and strength.

LENTEN HOSPITALITY

As fasting turns us towards God, it also creates space for others and moves us towards them. Fasting always leads to an open hearts and lives. Fasting re-orientes us to God and his love, which by nature, must be shared. It can not be said enough that fasting is not about the self or self-improvement, but a re-orientation away from the self.

How does this play out? Something small as fasting from Netflix and social media can lead to more time for fellowship and face-to-face connection with others. A little less money spent on yourself leads to a little more generosity to those around you. Experiencing hunger when fasting from a meal can give you new eyes to see the poor and embrace them in deeper solidarity.

Because fasting naturally draws us to others, Christians have used Lent for centuries as a time to cultivate mercy and compassion, or love of neighbor, especially the outcast, poor,

oppressed and marginalized. A word that captures this outward movement is *hospitality*. Fasting leads to and makes space for hospitality. “Hospitality” needs some, if not a lot, of re-imagining. We hear the word and we often associate it with the hotel and travel industries. We also associate it with tea and cookies or dinner parties. While these are not bad associations and part of hospitality, they do not tell the whole story. Hospitality has vital place in Christian history and practice. As Christine Pohl writes, “Hospitality is a way of life fundamental to Christian identity” and a “central dimension of Christian moral life.”

At it’s heart, Christian hospitality is a deep welcoming of others. This begins in the very life of God. In the Triune God, we see an eternal community of love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity embraces the other. Each blesses the other. Each does the will of the other. The Trinity is a mystery, but we see that God’s very nature is to welcome.

God’s deep welcome extends to his people. From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, God looks at his people and then invites and welcomes them into deep communion with him. This communion involves sharing his creative work and enjoying his bounty.

This welcome continues after Adam and Eve turn away in sin and then hide from him. What is God’s response? He seeks after them, he calls them, he approaches them, he embraces them and he covers them spiritually, emotionally and physically. He extends hospitality.

“IF THERE IS ANY CONCEPT WORTH RESTORING TO ITS ORIGINAL DEPTH AND EVOCATIVE POTENTIAL, IT IS THE CONCEPT OF HOSPITALITY.” — HENRI NOUWEN

“FOR MOST OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, HOSPITALITY WAS UNDERSTOOD TO ENCOMPASS PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS. IT MEANT RESPONSE TO THE PHYSICAL NEEDS OF STRANGERS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, AND PROTECTION, BUT ALSO A RECOGNITION OF THEIR WORTH AND COMMON HUMANITY. IN ALMOST EVERY CASE, HOSPITALITY INVOLVED SHARED MEALS; HISTORICALLY, TABLE FELLOWSHIP WAS AN IMPORTANT WAY OF RECOGNIZING THE EQUAL VALUE AND DIGNITY OF PERSONS.

— CHRISTINE POHL

Created in God’s image, God’s hospitality is imprinted on us: Adam and Eve extended God’s hospitality to one another not only as husband and wife, but also as co-laborers and stewards. When God calls Abraham and Sarah and makes a covenant with them to establish a new nation, God says that it will be a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:3). After God frees Israel from slavery to Egypt, God encodes hospitality to the sojourner (non-Israelite), the widow, the oppressed, and the poor in Israel’s law (Ex. 20:10, 22:21, Lev :25; Deut. 5:14). In doing so, God reminds Israel that he showed great kindness to them while they themselves were sojourners and oppressed in Egypt. The prophets repeatedly remind Israel that it was to be a welcoming light to the nations and a place of reconciliation (Is. 30:28, 66:12).

All of this is embodied in the life of Jesus and the early Church. Jesus is the light to all nations, not just to Israel. In his ministry, Jesus welcomes all into his presence. He eats with Jews and Gentiles. He heals both. He proclaims his Good News to both. He also welcomes the orphan, widow, poor and outcast. Likewise, the early church was renowned for its hospitality, especially towards the outsider. In his Epistles, the Apostle Paul urges the church to continue welcoming the outsider by pursuing hospitality (Rom. 12:13). The writer of Hebrews goes on

to say that by welcoming strangers, we may be entertaining angels unawares, like Abraham and Sarah did (Heb. 13:2).

Hospitality was an important social value of Jesus’s time. The Christian innovation was the extension of hospitality to people outside of one’s ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-economic group. God breaks down the barriers that separate us from him, and so Christian hospitality does the same and overcomes barriers separating us from one another. All throughout Scripture, we see how hospitality brings friends closer together, makes the stranger into friends, and brings dignity to the marginalized.

What keeps us from welcoming friends into deeper relationship and bridging the divide with strangers is more often than not our self-centeredness, selfishness and love of independence. Self-reflection brings this to light and re-orient us to God. Fasting cultivates new freedom and makes room in our lives for others. Hospitality extends the grace we experience to others. This is one of the many gifts of Lent.

Let’s keep a holy Lent together. Let’s turn our hearts to God and towards one another. Through fasting and hospitality, let us experience and extend the riches of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

With much love for you all,

The Pastors and Staff of Grace Pasadena.

WEEK OF MARCH 1

God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.

MORNING PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.” — *Ephesians 1:3-4*

In silence, lift up your hands and receive God’s lavish welcome and love.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. — *from Psalm 51*

MORNING READINGS

| | | |
|-----------|-----|------------------|
| Sunday | 3/1 | Psalms 63:1-8 |
| Monday | 3/2 | 1 Cor. 1:1-19 |
| Tuesday | 3/3 | 1 Cor. 1:20-31 |
| Wednesday | 3/4 | 1 Cor. 2:1-13 |
| Thursday | 3/5 | 1 Cor. 2:14-3:15 |
| Friday | 3/6 | 1 Cor. 3:16-23 |
| Saturday | 3/7 | 1 Cor. 4:1-7 |

FOR REFLECTION

- What do you notice in the passage? What gives you hope? What challenges you?
- What aspects of God’s character does the passage invite you to contemplate and experience?
- How might today’s word draw you closer to your friends, family and neighbors?

CLOSING PRAYERS

Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the “The Lord’s Prayer” or

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)

QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

- **Monday to Wednesday.** For the next few days, spend extra time in self-examination. Pray through the confession. Consider how the daily passage challenges you. Ask how God may be trying to re-orient your heart. Let the Holy Spirit bring to light anything in the dark. Write down your responses and offer them to God with confident hope.
 - **Monday:**
 - **Tuesday:**
 - **Wednesday**
- **Thursday to Saturday.** For the next few days, consider your Lenten fasting. If you've started to fast, take note of the ways the Spirit is leading you to a deeper dependence on God and creating new space for others. If you haven't started a fast, take time to consider why. What might you gain by abstaining? Think through each day and look at your habits and patterns. What do you notice? Do you see any opportunities to practice a fast?
 - **Thursday:**
 - **Friday:**
 - **Saturday**

WEEK OF MARCH 8

God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.

MORNING PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

“How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”
— *Psalm 36:7*

Take a few deep breaths and let God’s love wash over you and receive God’s welcome.

MORNING PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Jesus Christ, we confess we have failed you as did your first disciples. We ask for your mercy and your help. Our selfishness betrays you. We fail to share the pain of your suffering. We run away from those who abuse you. We are afraid of being known to belong to you. Lord, forgive us and have mercy.

Silence (sit quietly, or kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands)

MORNING READINGS

| | | |
|-----------|------|----------------|
| Sunday | 3/8 | Romans 6:3-14 |
| Monday | 3/9 | 1 Cor. 4:8-21 |
| Tuesday | 3/10 | 1 Cor. 5:1-8 |
| Wednesday | 3/11 | 1 Cor. 5:9-6:8 |
| Thursday | 3/12 | 1 Cor. 6:12-20 |
| Friday | 3/13 | 1 Cor. 7:1-9 |
| Saturday | 3/14 | 1 Cor. 7:10-24 |

FOR REFLECTION:

- Does this passage touch on or bring to light anything in your heart and mind?
- What invitation do you hear the Holy Spirit giving to you through the passage?
- What words of hope, faith or challenge can you speak to bring to those around you?

CLOSING PRAYERS

Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the “The Lord’s Prayer” or

God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)

QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

- **Monday to Wednesday.** Our God is a self-giving God. God is constantly reaching out towards us and inviting us into his very life of love. He invites us to find shelter in the shadow of his wing (Psalm 17:8; 36:7) and to feast with him (Isaiah 55:2). We see this clearly in Jesus Christ. In John 1 we read that Jesus is God who takes on human flesh in order to dwell among us. For the next few days, consider God's hospitality towards you. Reflect on any experiences that remind you God's hospitality.

- **Monday:**

- **Tuesday:**

- **Wednesday:**

- **Thursday to Saturday.** How might you extend God's hospitality to your family, roommates, and neighbors. How might you open your home and share your resources with both friends as well as the outcast, poor and stranger? How might our congregation further extend God's hospitality and open our doors to the stranger? What fears or hesitations, if any, surface when think about extending God's hospitality to others?

- **Thursday:**

- **Friday:**

- **Saturday:**

WEEK OF MARCH 15

God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.

MORNING PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

“And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.” — *Mat. 22:1-3*

Breath deeply. Receive God’s invitation to his kingdom and feast.

MORNING PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Prayerfully re-read Matthew 22:1-3. How are you resisting and even rejecting God’s invitation and hospitality? In silence (sit, kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands), confess.

MORNING READINGS

| | | |
|-----------|------|----------------|
| Sunday | 3/15 | Psalm 34 |
| Monday | 3/16 | 1 Cor. 7:25-31 |
| Tuesday | 3/17 | 1 Cor. 7:32-40 |
| Wednesday | 3/18 | 1 Cor. 8:1-13 |
| Thursday | 3/19 | 1 Cor. 9:1-15 |
| Friday | 3/20 | 1 Cor. 9:16-27 |
| Saturday | 3/21 | 1 Cor. 10:1-13 |

FOR REFLECTION:

- What surprises you in the text? What haven’t you considered before?
- What invitation to experience God’s new life do you hear? How can you receive it today?
- How might these words shape the words you speak and receive from your friends?

CLOSING PRAYERS

Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the “The Lord’s Prayer” or

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)

QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

- **Monday to Wednesday.** Consider your Lenten fasting. What are you learning about yourself? How are you experiencing God's mercy and grace as you fast (or fail) in your fast?
 - **Monday:**

 - **Tuesday:**

 - **Wednesday:**

- **Thursday to Saturday.** Take a look at the Mercy Ministry's list of recommended actions for Lent. Sometimes we need a little guidance in our self-giving and hospitality. What can you take on? What can you take on with others?

MARCH 22 TO MARCH 31

God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.

MORNING PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."
— *John 7:37*

Jesus offers you thirst quenching satisfaction. Take a few deep breaths and rejoice!

MORNING PRAYER OF CONFESSION

[The] day of the Lord is great and very awesome; who can endure it? "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. — *Joel 2:12-13*

What must you let go of in order to turn to God? Pray silently and offer these to God.

MORNING READINGS

| | | |
|-----------|------|------------------------|
| Sunday | 3/22 | Rom. 8:11-25 |
| Monday | 3/23 | 1 Cor. 10:14-11:1 |
| Tuesday | 3/24 | 1 Cor. 11:17-34 |
| Wednesday | 3/25 | 1 Cor. 12:1-11 |
| Thursday | 3/26 | 1 Cor. 12:12-26 |
| Friday | 3/27 | 1 Cor. 12:27-13:3 |
| Saturday | 3/28 | 1 Cor. 13:1-13 |
| Sunday | 3/29 | Rom. 12:1-21 |
| Monday | 3/30 | 1 Cor. 14:1-19 |
| Tuesday | 3/31 | 1 Cor. 14:20-33a,39-40 |

FOR REFLECTION:

- How is the passage helping you enter the story of Christ's death and resurrection?

CLOSING PRAYERS

Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the "The Lord's Prayer" or

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)

A SHORT LITURGY FOR EVENING PRAYER

OPENING VERSE & PRAYER -

“Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” —*Psalm 121:4*

EVENING PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Good God, we confess how we have rebelled against you. We are controlled by doubt and fear, and in our doubt we have gone our own way. We have been quick to blame others for our weakness and slow to accept responsibility for ourselves. Forgive us, and grant us your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Silence for reflection. (sit quietly, or kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands)

GOSPEL LESSON

See next page.

FOR REFLECTION:

- Re-read the passage. How does it speak to and help you find closure to the day behind you?
- How does it help you see Jesus in your day?

CLOSING PRAYERS

Offer prayers for the day ahead and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Consider kneeling as you pray. Finish with the “The Lord’s Prayer” and one of the the following:

God, the light of your truth gives sight to the darkness of sinful eyes. May this season of repentance bring us the blessing of Your forgiveness and the gift of Your light. *Amen.*

OR

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. ***Amen.***

OR

The Lord Almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end. ***Amen.***

LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR MORNING PRAYER

EVENING GOSPEL READINGS

3/1 - John 12:44-50
3/2 - Mark 1:1-13
3/3 - Mark 1:14-28
3/4 - Mark 1:29-45
3/5 - Mark 2:1-12
3/6 - Mark 2:13-22
3/7 - Mark 2:23-3:6
3/8 - John 5:19-24
3/9 - Mark 3:7-19a
3/10 - Mark 3:19b-35
3/11 - Mark 4:1-20
3/12 - Mark 4:21-34
3/13 - Mark 4:35-41
3/14 - Mark 5:1-20
3/15 - John 5:25-29
3/16 - Mark 5:21-43
3/17 - Mark 6:1-13
3/18 - Mark 6:13-29
3/19 - Mark 6:30-46
3/20 - Mark 6:47-56
3/21 - Mark 7:1-23
3/22 - John 6:27-40
3/23 - Mark 7:24-37
3/24 - Mark 8:1-10
3/25 - Mark 8:11-26
3/26 - Mark 8:27-9:1
3/27 - Mark 9:2-13
3/28 - Mark 9:14-29
3/29 - John 8:46-59
3/30 - Mark 9:30-41
3/31 - Mark 9:42-50

FOR REFLECTION - FROM PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

"There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself.

When you fast, see the fasting of others. If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery.

Let this be the pattern for all men when they practice mercy: show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you.

Therefore, let prayer, mercy and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defense, a threefold united prayer in our favor.

Let us use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others. Let us offer our souls in sacrifice by means of fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the psalmist said in prophecy: A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a bruised and humbled heart.

Offer your soul to God, make him an oblation of your fasting, so that your soul may be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made over to God. Whoever fails to give this to God will not be excused, for if you are to give him yourself you are never without the means of giving.

To make these acceptable, mercy must be added. Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to the earth. However much you may cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, sow virtues, if you do not release the springs of mercy, your fasting will bear no fruit.

When you fast, if your mercy is thin your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others." -- *Sermon 43, 5th Century*

OTHER RESOURCES

For further exploration of fasting and hospitality:

- *Making Room* by Christine Pohl
- *Celebration of the Disciplines, chapter 4*, by Richard Foster

Visit our website for the following Lenten resources:

- The Mercy Ministry Compassion Calendar
- Family and Children’s Lenten guides and activities
- “Keeping a Holy Lent” by Craig Higgins
- “40 Reasons for Lent” by Peter Leithart

Lenten art and devotionals:

- “Taking Up Painting for Lent” by Patty Wickman at <http://bit.ly/40daysLentPaintings>
- “2020 Biola Lent Project” at <http://bit.ly/2020BiolaLentProject>
- “Preparing for Easter: Fifty Devotional Readings from C. S. Lewis,” edited by Zachry Kincaid
- “Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter,” published by Plough Publishing House

The Rule of Life -- Looking Ahead

April – Stability of Heart & Place

May – Work & Creating

June – Balance: Putting it All Together

