

## Celebrating the Season of Lent



The season of Lent is a sacred and special time of year, a period of prayer and preparation leading to our commemoration of that first Easter morning when Jesus rose from the dead, conquering death and freeing us to lead lives of value and virtue. We are encouraged during the course of these six weeks to enter more deeply into a life of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These ancient practices are crucial ways to help us deepen our relationship with God and strengthen us as we strive each day to respond to the gospel call. These practices, each in its own way, help to guide our journey through this sacred season and beyond.

At the heart of Lent is the desire to build a loving and lasting relationship with God, who loves us more than we could ever love ourselves. The season provides us with the opportunity to evaluate our lives, asking ourselves questions about how to be a better person, how to live my faith more authentically, and to develop a more meaningful relationship with God. How can I foster a deeper relationship with God through times of prayer, meditation, and reflection, through selfless service on behalf of others in need, and by fasting from whatever takes me away from God and the life to which God is calling me? It is through my commitment to engaging in these ancient spiritual practices and reflecting on these profound questions, that will make this Lenten journey meaningful and truly make the joy of Easter morning a celebration of new life in and through the Risen Christ.

This Lenten journey is not intended to be one of gloom and darkness, but is rather, a time of anticipation and excitement, a time for new beginnings, the chance to start again, and to celebrate the gift of new life.

## **Prayers**

### **Ash Wednesday**

Gracious God,

The season of Lent is a time of anticipation and excitement as we grow in our relationship with you. Help us to see the value of this special season, not as one of gloom and darkness, but rather a time to focus on who we are as a loved one in your flock. May the ashes we receive today, as a symbol of reconciliation with you, guide us to live more fully each day in love. We ask this through your sacrificial love for us. Amen.

### **Thursday after Ash Wednesday**

God of simplicity,

St. Francis of Assisi gave up everything he owned to become poor like those he served. Through his example, and the example of Jesus, help us to make time on this Lenten journey to evaluate what we need and what we can “let go of” in order to draw closer to you and to those with whom you dwell. As Mahatma Gandhi stated, help us to “live simply so others may simply live,” all for your glory. Amen.

### **Friday after Ash Wednesday**

Loving God,

These next six weeks are a special time for all Christians. It is a time to deepen our understanding of who we are in light of our relationship with you, and to reconcile those times that we may not have followed the path to you. Guide us through prayer to search inwardly and repent for anything that separates us from your care. Once renewed through your loving forgiveness, help us to reach out to others through your love in ways that will change our world for the good. Through your Son, we pray. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection**

What concretely do I plan to do to deepen my relationship with God during this Lenten season?

How will my participation in the season of Lent renew my commitment to extend the compassionate ministry of Jesus to others, especially people who are poor and vulnerable?

What can I do to make sure I approach the season of Lent with anticipation and excitement?