

## Celebrating the Season of Lent



### **Theme: Repentance**

Political scientists often identify two forms of liberalism in American political thought and behavior, humanistic liberalism and reform liberalism. Simply put, humanistic liberalism emphasizes freedom from external constraints as human beings pursue goals of their own choosing. Reform liberalism, on the other hand, believes institutions should advance policies that would emphasize and encourage citizens to use their freedom for developing their gifts to the highest possible form. These two forms of liberalism represent two aspects of human freedom, freedom from and freedom for.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus calls his hearers to repent and believe the good news. During the days of this sacred season, Jesus is still calling each of us to repent. Repentance is an invitation to pursue the two freedoms highlighted by American liberalism, freedom from and freedom for. Repentance pursues freedom from: freedom from all those things in our lives keeping us from God. To repent is to express sorrow for and to turn away from temptations, inappropriate desires, unjust or uncharitable actions that keep us separated from God and others. It involves a turning away from the things preventing us from being the people God has created and called us to be. But repentance is not only about turning away from things keeping us from God. I can stop walking away from God but that does not necessarily mean I have turned around to walk back to God. Therefore, repentance also pursues freedom for: repentance is about intentionally pursuing those things in our lives that reflect who and what God is calling us to be: love, justice, goodness, joy, compassion, good help, humility, and mercy.

Take a few moments during the course of this first full week of Lent and identify what in your life you need to be free from and what you need to be free for. The call to repent is a sacred invitation to begin again, to be free from the things preventing us from being the people God calls us to be and the freedom for embodying all the dimensions of the life of true discipleship.

## **Prayers**

### **Prayer for Monday of the First Week of Lent**

God of Forgiveness,

As we enter this season of Lent, help us to be mindful of the things we need to be 'free from' in order to draw closer to you. Guide us through distractions, asking forgiveness, and moving forward with confidence in your love for us. Help us to spread your love to all those we meet this day. We ask this in your name, Amen.

### **Prayer for Tuesday of the First Week of Lent**

God of all,

Your love for each person is always greater than any wrongs we have committed, giving us hope that our relationship with you can be restored through your forgiveness. Repenting of our failings allows us the 'freedom to' draw closer to you through loving actions on behalf of others, random acts of kindness, and moments of quiet reflection to share time with you. Grateful for your love, we pray. Amen.

### **Prayer for Wednesday of the First Week of Lent**

Loving God,

During this first week of Lent, guide us that we might be open to growing closer to you. Throughout each day, let us be conscious of ways we can share your love and forgiveness with those with whom we come in contact, so that our actions reflect your love for them. If we have been hurt by someone, help us to forgive as you forgive, and move forward with a heart full of gratitude. For this we pray, Amen.

### **Prayer for Thursday of the First Week of Lent**

God of Peace,

Bless us with the peace flowing from knowing we are walking the path to you. Help us to keep this path clear by asking forgiveness for any wrongs we may have committed, and by loving each person we encounter in ways that reflect your love for them. Through your example of love and forgiveness, may we be able to live a more peace-filled life. Amen.

### **Prayer for Friday of the First Week of Lent**

God of the Sorrowful,

Though the wrongs we commit may often bring sorrow, we look to you to raise us from that sorrow to a place of joy. As we take time to reflect upon our lives during Lent, remind us of the joy that comes from repentance. Help us to overcome any temptations preventing us from living a more fulfilling life of joy. For this we pray, Amen.

## **Questions for Reflection**

What concretely do I plan to do to participate in the season of Lent and how will it draw me closer to God?

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?

How can a spirit of repentance during this season of Lent help me to lead a more fulfilling life?