



Lent 2026 Hope and Renewal

Keeping the Season of Lent with Pope Leo XIV's *Dilexi te, On the Love for the Poor*

A Five-Week Small Group Reflection Guide

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Through the Season of Lent with Pope Leo XIV

A Five-Week Small Group Reflection for the Archdiocese of Seattle

LENT 2026

WHAT: Five 60-90 minute small group sessions of prayer and reflection for the Jubilee Year, focused on the Lenten Scriptures with reflections from Pope Leo XIV's *Dilexi te*

WHEN: The first five weeks of Lent 2026

WHY: During this Lenten season, we reflect on the Word of God and pray that our hearts may be open to encounter Jesus in all the ways he comes to us: in word, in sacrament, in service, and in all his people, especially the poor.

WHO: The simple format will require a facilitator, and 6-8 participants for each group. (Given the focus on sharing and listening, larger groups could be challenging.)

HOW: The sessions can be held in the parish or in homes. You can also adapt the materials as you see fit for a classroom or meeting.

FORMAT FOR EACH SESSION / FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

OPENING PRAYER (about 10 minutes)

- Sign of the Cross
- The designated Scripture passage is read aloud slowly by one of the participants.
- A few moments of silence follow. Then the reflection from Pope Leo XIV is read.
- An extended time of silent prayer follows - 3-5 minutes.

FIRST ROUND OF SHARING (about 20 minutes)

- The facilitator introduces the reflection question for the first round of sharing. Then, for 2-3 minutes, each person in the group shares once in response to the prompt. After each person shares, there is a moment for quiet reflection before the next person shares. You are encouraged to listen in silence, with no back-and-forth or dialogue at this point.
- After each person has shared, the facilitator invites all to reflect in silence for about 1 minute.

WHAT WE HEARD (about 5 minutes)

- The facilitator now invites each person to name one thing that struck them in the first round of listening. It could be something they heard or something that occurred to them as they listened. Each person shares once, briefly.

SECOND ROUND OF SHARING (about 20 minutes)

- The facilitator shares the second question for reflection. Again, for 2-3 minutes, each person in the group shares once in response to the prompt. After each person shares, there is a moment for quiet reflection.

WHAT WE HEARD (about 15 minutes)

- After the second round of sharing has concluded, the facilitator invites a conversation about what was heard in this gathering. What challenged you? What will stay with you? For you, where did you sense the Holy Spirit moving in our listening and sharing?

CONCLUDING PRAYER (about 10 minutes)

- The facilitator opens up for prayer and offers petitions, then invites EACH person to lift up ONE intention for which they would like the group's prayers.
- The intercessions are closed with the Lord's Prayer.
- If desired, conclude with a sign of peace.

WEEK I - LOVE BEYOND WORDS

OPENING PRAYER

- Sign of the Cross
- Song (if desired/possible)

READING

Matthew 26:6-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Now when Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil and poured it on his head while he was reclining at table.

When the disciples saw this, they were indignant and said, "Why this waste? It could have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor."

Since Jesus knew this, he said to them, "Why do you make trouble for the woman? She has done a good thing for me. The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me. In pouring this perfumed oil upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Amen, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her."

REFLECTION FROM POPE LEO XIV, *DILEXI TE*

Jesus' disciples criticized the woman who poured costly perfumed oil on his head. They said: "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." However, the Lord said to them in response: "You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me." That woman saw in Jesus the lowly and suffering Messiah on whom she could pour out all her love. What comfort that anointing must have brought to the very head that within a few days would be pierced by thorns! It was a small gesture, of course, but those who suffer know how great even a small gesture of affection can be, and how much relief it can bring.... The simplicity of that woman's gesture speaks volumes. No sign of affection, even the smallest, will ever be forgotten, especially if it is shown to those who are suffering, lonely or in need, as was the Lord at that time.

ROUND ONE REFLECTION QUESTION

- The woman expresses her love for Jesus not with words, but with deeds. What are the wordless ways you have experienced the love of family and friends? How do you express love for others not in words, but deeds?

ROUND TWO REFLECTION QUESTION

- As Church, as a parish family, how are we called to show our love for the poor with words – and without words?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: Gathered together in Christ, let us offer our prayers.

For this local Church, and for our parish family, that we may remember the poor and encounter Christ in those who are poor.

For all of us, that during these holy days of Lent, we may recognize that the Lord is in our midst, in word and in sacrament, in our parish communities, and in the poor. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Lent?

After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:

With longing for the coming of the kingdom,
let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Sign of Peace

GO DEEPER - Read the introduction and chapter 1 of Pope Leo's *Dilexi te*.

You can find the full text here: https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html

ENCOUNTER THE POOR - As you go about your daily rhythms this week, look for the poor. Where are they? What does poverty look like in your community?

WEEK II - CHRIST BECAME POOR

OPENING PRAYER

- Sign of the Cross
- Song (if desired/possible)

READING

Matthew 8:19-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

A scribe approached and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."

REFLECTION FROM POPE LEO XIV, *DILEXI TE*

The Gospel shows us that poverty marked every aspect of Jesus' life. From the moment he entered the world, Jesus knew the bitter experience of rejection. The Evangelist Luke tells how Joseph and Mary, who was about to give birth, arrived in Bethlehem, and then adds, poignantly, that "there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2:7). Jesus was born in humble surroundings and laid in a manger; then, to save him from being killed, they fled to Egypt. At the dawn of his public ministry, after announcing in the synagogue of Nazareth that the year of grace which would bring joy to the poor was fulfilled in him, he was driven out of town. He died as an outcast, led out of Jerusalem to be crucified. Indeed, that is how Jesus' poverty is best described: he experienced the same exclusion that is the lot of the poor, the outcast of society.... He presented himself to the world not only as a poor Messiah, but also as the Messiah of and for the poor.

ROUND ONE REFLECTION QUESTION

- Jesus was poor and outcast, "of and for the poor." How does this deepen or challenge my image of who Jesus is—and who Jesus is for me?

ROUND TWO REFLECTION QUESTION

- How are the poor treated in our society? How is their experience like that of Jesus?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: To Jesus Christ, who became poor for our sake, let us pray.

For this local Church, and for our parish family, that we may recognize God's glory, shining in those around us, especially those who are poor and those on the margins. We pray to the Lord.

For all of us, that during these holy days of Lent, we may come to know Jesus better, in his suffering humanity and in his glorious divinity. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Lent?

After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:

Jesus has taught us to call God Father, and so we dare to pray:

Lord's Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Sign of Peace

GO DEEPER - Read Chapter 2 of Pope Leo's *Dilexi te*.

You can find the full text here: https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html

ENCOUNTER THE POOR - This week, learn more about what is happening in service of the poor in your parish and in your parish family. How is Christ being served in those who are poor?

WEEK III - AS ONE WHO SERVES

OPENING PRAYER

- Sign of the Cross
- Song (if desired/possible)

READING

Luke 22:14, 24-27

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at table with the apostles.... Then an argument broke out among them about which of them should be regarded as the greatest. He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those in authority over them are addressed as 'Benefactors'; but among you it shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater: the one seated at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one seated at table? I am among you as the one who serves."

REFLECTION FROM POPE LEO XIV, *DILEXI TE*

Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople from the late 300s to the early 400s... exhorted the faithful to recognize Christ in the needy: "Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Do not allow it to be despised in its members, that is, in the poor, who have no clothes to cover themselves. Do not honor Christ's body here in church with silk fabrics, while outside you neglect it when it suffers from cold and nakedness... Give him the honor he has commanded, and let the poor benefit from your riches. God does not need golden vessels, but golden souls."

Affirming with crystal clarity that, if the faithful do not encounter Christ in the poor who stand at the door, they will not be able to worship him even at the altar, he continues: "What advantage does Christ gain if the sacrificial table is laden with golden vessels, while he himself dies of hunger in the person of the poor? Feed the hungry first, and only afterward adorn the altar with what remains."

He understood the Eucharist, therefore, as a sacramental expression of the charity and justice that both preceded and accompanied it. That same charity and justice should perpetuate the Eucharist through love and attention to the poor. Consequently, charity is not optional but a requirement of true worship.

ROUND ONE REFLECTION QUESTION

- In *Dilexi te*, Pope Leo XIV lifts up many saints as examples of service and care for the poor. Who are the exemplars of faith—whether canonized or not—who have shaped and inspired the way you live your faith?

ROUND TWO REFLECTION QUESTION

- We call our participation in the Eucharist “communion.” We are joined in communion with Christ and with each other. What does it mean to be in communion with others in the Body of Christ? How do you experience that in our parish community?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: To God, who calls us to worship and service, let us pray.

For the Church, that our prayer and worship may overflow into mission. We pray to the Lord.

For all of us, that during these holy days of Lent, we may see the needs around us and respond with generous love. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Lent?

After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:

We pattern our prayer on the prayer of Christ, and say:

Lord's Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Sign of Peace

GO DEEPER – Read Chapter 3 of Pope Leo's *Dilexi te*.

You can find the full text here: https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html

ENCOUNTER THE POOR – This week, let your participation in the Eucharist overflow into concrete service of some kind for the poor or marginalized.

WEEK IV - THE EYES OF GOD

OPENING PRAYER

- Sign of the Cross
- Song (if desired/possible)

READING

1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-7

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

The LORD said to Samuel: "Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons."

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is here before him."

But the LORD said to Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart."

The word of the Lord.

FROM POPE LEO XIV, *DILEXI TE*

The current model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favor an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life. The same questions keep coming back to us. Does this mean that the less gifted are not human beings? Or that the weak do not have the same dignity as ourselves? Are those born with fewer opportunities of lesser value as human beings? Should they limit themselves merely to surviving? The worth of our societies, and our own future, depends on the answers we give to these questions. Either we regain our moral and spiritual dignity or we fall into a cesspool. (95)

ROUND ONE REFLECTION QUESTION

- "Not as humans see does God see." Can you think of a time in your own experience when you misjudged someone? Was there a time when you felt judged based on appearances?
- What does genuine human dignity look like? What does living fully look like—as opposed to merely surviving?

ROUND TWO REFLECTION QUESTION

- What do you think God sees when he looks upon our world—our Church—our parish family?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: To God, who looks with love upon the whole human family, let us pray.

For the Church, that all who are preparing for baptism at Easter may find a loving home in the Church. We pray to the Lord.

For all of us, that during these holy days of Lent, we may learn to look upon others with God's eyes. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Lent?

After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Sign of Peace

GO DEEPER - Read Chapter 4 of Pope Leo's *Dilexi te*.

You can find the full text here: https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html

ENCOUNTER THE POOR - Pope Leo XIV writes, "reality is best viewed from the sidelines" (*Dilexi te*, 82). As you go about your week, try looking at the world through the eyes of the poor. How does society look different from the sidelines—to those who are marginalized?

WEEK V - LOVE THAT WORKS MIRACLES

OPENING PRAYER

- Sign of the Cross
- Song (if desired/possible)

READING

John 11:32-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to him, "Sir, come and see."

And Jesus wept.

So the Jews said, "See how he loved him."

But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days."

Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?"

FROM POPE LEO XIV, DILEXI TE

Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. It spans chasms that are humanly impossible to bridge, and it penetrates to the most hidden crevices of society. By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today.

Through your work, your efforts to change unjust social structures or your simple, heartfelt gesture of closeness and support, the poor will come to realize that Jesus' words are addressed personally to each of them: "I have loved you" (Rev 3:9). (120-21)

ROUND ONE REFLECTION QUESTION

- How does love change us? In your own experience, how has knowing you were loved—by God or by another person—changed you?

ROUND TWO REFLECTION QUESTION

- Who needs to know they are loved in our community? How can we express that transforming love? How do we deal with those we find it difficult to love?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: To the Lord who raised Lazarus from the dead, let us pray for the gift of new life.

For the Church, that we may be a sign and an instrument of God's love for a world in need. We pray to the Lord.

For all of us, that during the coming Holy Week, we may be courageous in asking God to work new wonders in our lives and in our Church. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Lent?

After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:

Let us make our prayers and praise complete by offering the Lord's Prayer:

Lord's Prayer

Sign of the Cross

Sign of Peace

GO DEEPER – Read Chapter 5 of Pope Leo's *Dilexi te*.

You can find the full text here: https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html

ENCOUNTER THE POOR – This week, give alms to someone in need. "Almsgiving at least offers us a chance to halt before the poor, to look into their eyes, to touch them and to share something of ourselves with them." (Pope Leo XIV)