

**Lenten Prayer**  
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**Ash Wednesday**



**Hymn:** [Share Your Bread with the Hungry](#) – David Haas, GIA

Verse 1. Clothe the naked and take them to your care.  
Do not turn your back on your own.  
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your wounds will be bound and healed.

Refrain: If you share your bread with the hungry,  
if you welcome the poor to your home,  
then your light will shine, your light will shine,  
and the sun will rise once more.

Verse 2. And your dignity shall go forth before you.  
And the glory of God shall keep you safe.  
Then you shall call, and your God will answer.  
You'll cry and God will be there. (Refrain)

Interlude

Verse 3. If you remove all oppression from your midst  
and the shame of those who do you harm.  
If you do offer your bread to the hungry,  
your God will dwell with you. (Refrain 2x)

## **Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, we come to you so that you may sweep out the corners of our being where sin has accumulated and uncover the ways we have strayed from your truth. Expose the empty and barren places where we don't allow you to enter. Reveal our half-hearted struggles and where we have been indifferent to the suffering of others.

Take our hearts and every hardened edge and create something new in us. We need your newness: the rough parts of us made smooth, the stagnant, stirred; the stuck, freed; the unkind, forgiven. And then, by the power of your Spirit, we need to be turned toward love again.

We bring to you our burdens and brokenness, our self-image bruised and hurting, our fears, shame, doubts, and anxieties so that in our dark tunnels we may begin to see light, and in our desert experiences we may find you.

You shatter our illusions of righteousness and unmask our divided hearts, in order that we might be filled with longing for justice and generosity and so be made whole.

And as justice and generosity are true marks of a heart turning towards you, let our actions as well as our intentions bear witness for the longing of our hearts. Amen.

## **Reading: Isaiah 58:6-9**

Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke?

Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh?

Then your light shall break forth like dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: "Here I am!" If you remove the yoke from among you, the accusing finger, and malicious speech.

## **Reflection: From a letter to the Corinthians by S. Clement, Pope**

God wanted all his beloved ones to have the opportunity to repent, and he confirmed this desire by his own almighty will. That is why we should obey his sovereign and glorious will and prayerfully entreat his mercy and kindness. We should be suppliant before him and turn to his compassion, rejecting empty works and quarreling and jealousy which only lead to death.

Brothers, we should be humble in mind, putting aside all arrogance, pride and foolish anger.

Recall especially what the Lord Jesus said when he taught gentleness and forbearance.

Let these commandments and precepts strengthen us to live in humble obedience to his sacred words.

Sharing then in the heritage of so many vast and glorious achievements, let us hasten toward the goal of peace, set before us from the beginning. Let us keep our eyes firmly fixed on the Father and Creator of the whole universe and hold fast to his splendid and transcendent gifts of peace and all his blessings.

**Antiphon:** Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

## Together let us pray Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be ...*

## Intercessory Prayer:

Almighty God and Father, at the beginning of this Lenten season, we are met with the challenge of handing over every bit of our lives that do not come from you, to rid ourselves of what clutters our lives, and all that distracts us from the simple truth of your love for us.

Your prophets have called us to change the way we worship, to make internal sacrifices instead of external ones, to seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with you each and every one of our days.

So, lead and guide us on this Lenten way. May we walk with Jesus toward the hill just outside of Jerusalem. May we, like him, take up our cross and follow, spending each moment of our lives living responsively to you, just as Christ himself did, for that is the faithful way.

Keep us strong in the face of temptation, teach us all to rely on you at dark times of attack, and let your Word be our only strength. Help us to support each other at moments of weakness and give us the strength to stand strong for others.

Give us a vision of our world as your love would make it: a world where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor; a world where the benefits of progress are shared, and everyone can enjoy them; a world where different races, nations and cultures live in tolerance and mutual respect; a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love. And give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Blessing: And may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon us and with us remain forever and ever.**

## Lenten Prayer

### Week 1



**Hymn:** [With What Shall I Come Before the Lord?](#) – John Ness Beck

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings?

Shall I come before Him with yearling calves?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I give him my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has shown you, O man. He has shown you what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God.

#### **Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, your Spirit leads us into the desert of our souls to face the truth about the world and ourselves. We are easily distracted in the wilderness of our lives, by every call to go this way or that, to turn stone to bread, leap from mountains, and do all that would keep us from the truth.

Instead of following where you lead, at times we follow a tempter who shows us a vision of the world that is a mere counterfeit of what you desire for us. At times we are deceived and enticed by imitations of love, abundance, and joy.

Show us your ways and teach us your paths and guide us towards your truth. Help us to resist the worship of empty power, so that we in may find our true food Jesus Christ, the broken bread.

Your Spirit compels us to go into the wilderness, and we ask for the courage to examine the desert places in our hearts, and to be willing to face the adversaries in our lives—all that lures us away from being who you have created us to be.

We pray for the courage to face our wild beasts and fears. Relieve the troubles of our hearts, and the devastation of our distress.

Show us who we truly are in your sight; expose the illusions that distort our vision, deliver us from temptations that contort our living. Free us from all evil, so that we may serve you in peace and joy.

Help us to use this season of Lent to learn that in letting go we become free, rather than deprived, generous rather than covetous, and spacious rather than restricted.

### **Reading: Ezekiel 18:21-23, 27-28**

But if the wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed, if he keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live. He shall not die!

None of the crimes he has committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live because of the justice he has shown.

Do I find pleasure in the death of the wicked oracle of the Lord GOD? Do I not rejoice when they turn from their evil way and live?

If the wicked turn from the wickedness they did and do what is right and just, they saved their lives; since they turned away from all the sins they committed, they shall live; they shall not die.

### **Reflection: From a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, pope**

Dear friends, what the Christian should be doing at all times should be done now with greater care and devotion, so that the Lenten fast enjoined by the apostles may be fulfilled, not simply by abstinence from food but above all by the renunciation of sin.

There is no more profitable practice as a companion to holy and spiritual fasting than that of almsgiving. This embraces under the single name of mercy many excellent works of devotion.

The person who shows love and compassion to those in any kind of affliction is blessed, not only with the virtue of goodwill but also with the gift of peace.

The works of mercy are innumerable. Their very variety brings this advantage to those who are true Christians, that in the matter of almsgiving not only the rich and affluent but also those of average means and the poor are able to play their part. Those who are unequal in their capacity to give can be equal in the love within their hearts.

**Antiphon:** Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.

## Together let us pray Psalm 6

Incline your ear, O LORD; answer me, for I am afflicted and poor. Keep my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for to you I call all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you. Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading.

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be ...*

## **Intercessory Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, help us to use this season of Lent to examine our attachments, and to see that you invite us to live more simply and deeply. Shine the light of your love into the private corners of our lives so that we may realize that we have acquired so much clutter that it has begun to restrict our freedom. Grant us the strength to free ourselves from appetites and needs that drive us into taking, having, and wanting more than we need or have time for, and affirm that “One does not live by bread alone.”

Strengthen and sustain our families and our communities. Nurture the bonds between us and inspire us to live with empathy and forgiveness. Help those struggling with work or facing uncertainty in their futures, that they may find peace in your abundant love.

Be our vision that we too may give time to others and respond to their needs. Give us the gladness of your help and support us with a willing spirit. Be our vision that through our prayers, fasting and almsgiving we too may draw closer to you and find your way; and may work for justice where injustice reigns.

Enable us to admit the temptations of the world and support us to resist turning away from your teaching. Deepen our faith to hear your word and follow your way. Encourage us to bring all our hopes and desires to you in prayer, that in lifting our souls to you, we may be shaped by your love and overcome the powers of darkness that obscure your compassion and love for all of creation. Amen.

**Blessing: And may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon us and with us remain forever and ever.**

## Lenten Prayer

### Week 2



#### **Hymn: [Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?](#)** – Alan Jackson

Verse 1. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Refrain: Are you washed, in the blood?

In the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?  
Are your garments spotless, are they white as snow?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Verse 2. Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin  
and be washed in the blood of the Lamb.  
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean.  
Oh, be washed in the blood of the Lamb. (Refrain)

#### **Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, we confess that we are an arrogant people so full of “knowledge” that we hardly have any room for love. We confess that we too often judge when we really need to listen, that we push people away when you call us to welcome them into our communities, that we think only about protecting ourselves when we are challenged to risk everything for others.

Forgive us for being more concerned with “being right” than we are with showing love, for demanding uniformity when you call us to celebrate diversity. Guide us to live according to your unconditional love. Teach us to see one another as sisters and brothers, that we may learn to live as one family.

Forgive us when we contribute to the brokenness of the world and the lives of people around us. In the silence we name the things we have done that separate us from you and from others.

We confess our need to you, and we turn to you with hearts filled with hope, remembering the promises you have made to us to hide us in your shelter in the day of trouble. You have promised to set us high on a rock, above those powers and forces that batter us, that tempt us, that work against us.

We confess that we do not trust You fully. We put our hope in worldly gain and in human promises and find ourselves defeated and lost when things fall apart. Call us back to you so that we may put our trust in you and not be afraid. Amen.

### **Reading: Isaiah 1:16-20**

Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good.

Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow.

Come now, let us set things right, says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they may become white as wool.

If you are willing, and obey, you shall eat the good things of the land; but if you refuse and resist, you shall be eaten by the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken!

### **Reflection: From a homily by Saint John Chrysostom, bishop**

Prayer and converse with God is a supreme good: it is a partnership and union with God. As the eyes of the body are enlightened when they see light, so our spirit, when it is intent on God, is illumined by his infinite light. I do not mean the prayer of outward observance but prayer from the heart, not confined to fixed times or periods but continuous throughout the day and night.

Our spirit should be quick to reach out toward God, not only when it is engaged in meditation; at other times also, when it is carrying out its duties, caring for the needy, performing works of charity, giving generously in the service of others, our spirit should long for God and call him to mind, so that these works may be seasoned with the salt of God’s love, and so make a palatable offering to the Lord of the universe. Throughout the whole of our lives, we may enjoy the benefit that comes from prayer if we devote a great deal of time to it.

**Antiphon:** From all their distress God rescues the just. Glorify the LORD with me,

## Together let us pray Psalm 34

Let us together extol his name. I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy, and your faces may not blush with shame. When the poor one called out, the LORD heard, and from all his distress he saved him.

The LORD has eyes for the just, and ears for their cry. The LORD confronts the evildoers, to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.

When they just cry out, the LORD hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit, he saves.

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be ...*

## Intercessory Prayer:

Almighty God and Father, God of goodness and mercy, of gentleness and kindness, of righteousness and faithfulness, be the light of our salvation and sustain our souls.

We offer the daily tasks that consume us to you, for we accomplish nothing without your grace. We submit to your will that we should love you with our everything and love our neighbors, and even our enemies, as ourselves.

Renew us and transform us by your steadfast love into your people. Help us to live our lives as a reflection of divine glory. May we walk among our brothers and sister as a blessing, bearing light into dark places, hope to displace despair, and love that casts out hate.

Teach us to be sharers of the blessings we enjoy: the blessing of plenty shared with those who have need; the blessing of healing shared with those who are sick and wounded; the blessing of joy shared with those who celebrate and of tears shared with those who grieve; the blessing of friendship shared with those who are excluded, and of solidarity with those who fight injustice; the blessing of peace shared with those in conflict, and of confrontation shared with those who bring harm. And in some small way, may our faith and our sharing help to bring your promises into being in our world.

Cleanse our lives of all shameful attitudes of mind and heart so that we reveal your glory in and through all we do and say and are. Amen

**Blessing: And may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon us and with us remain forever and ever.**

## Lenten Prayer

### Week 3



**Hymn:** [Your Grace is Enough](#) – Chris Tomlin

Verse 1. Great is Your faithfulness, oh God. You wrestle with the sinner's heart. You lead us by still waters into mercy, and nothing can keep us apart.

So, remember Your people. Remember Your children. Remember Your promise, Oh God.

Your grace is enough. Your grace is enough. Your grace is enough for me.

Verse 2. Great is Your love and justice God of Jacob. You use the weak to lead the strong. You lead us in the song of Your salvation, and all Your people sing along.

So, remember Your people Remember Your children Remember Your promise Oh God.

Your grace is enough Your grace is enough Your grace is enough for me [x2]

So, remember Your people. Remember Your children. Remember Your promise Oh God.

Your grace is enough. Your grace is enough. Your grace is enough for me. Your grace is enough, heaven reaching down to us.

Your grace is enough for me. God, I see your grace is enough. I'm covered in your love. Your grace is enough for me, for me.

## **Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, we have wandered down many paths, seeking happiness or glory; we have trusted in lesser gods, looking for safe haven from the dangers that threaten. But the deep hungers are not satisfied; the fears and anxieties still haunt us. Take our weariness and our fears and grow new courage in us. Take our resignation to the way things are and pull us into your passionate love.

Forgive us for our fearfulness, as we rely more upon our own human illusions of control and satisfaction, even though we know that these illusions separate us from you. Forgive us for not trusting in your grace, in your abundance, in the covenant promises that you have renewed with every generation. Strengthen us to live in a manner worthy of the Good News we have received, offering our lives in service of your kingdom, where the last are first, and the first are last, and there is grace enough for all.

Forgive our frivolous attitude toward life, our callousness toward suffering, our envy of those who have more than we have, our obsession with creating a life of constant pleasure, our indifference to the treasures of heaven, our neglect of your wise and gracious law.

Help us keep your word at the center of our lives; a light to guide our way in whatever darkness we encounter, or whatever temptations we face. Teach us what it means to follow Your commandments, and to walk in Your ways. Help us to change our way of life so that we may desire what is good, love what you love, and do what you command. Amen

## **Reading: Micah 7:18-20**

Who is a God like you, who removes guilt and pardons sin for the remnant of his inheritance; who does not persist in anger forever, but instead delights in mercy, and will again have compassion on us, treading underfoot our iniquities?

You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins; you will show faithfulness to Jacob, and loyalty to Abraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors from days of old.

## **Reflection: From a sermon by Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, bishop**

Who has given you dominion over animals, those that are tame and those that provide you with food? Who has made you lord and master of everything on earth? In short, who has endowed you with all that makes man superior to all other living creatures?

Is it not God who asks you now in your turn to show yourself generous above all other creatures and for the sake of all other creatures? Because we have received from him so many wonderful gifts, will we not be ashamed to refuse him this one thing only, our generosity? Though he is God and Lord he is not afraid to be known as our Father. Shall we for our part repudiate those who are our kith and kin?

**Antiphon:** Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

## **Together let us pray Psalm 138**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels, I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name.

Because of your kindness and your truth; for you have made great above all things your name and your promise. When I called, you answered me; you built up strength within me.

Your right hand saves me. The LORD will complete what he has done for me; your kindness, O LORD, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands.

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be ...*

**Intercessory Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, as we rejoice in the bounty of your world, we remember those who do not have enough, the thousands who are daily dying of hunger. Teach us to value people more than things. Above all, help us to set our hearts on your kingdom of love and justice, and to seek to do your will here on earth.

Instill in us, again, your hope in place of our despair, your peace where our hatred threatens, your joy amidst our depression, your love overwhelming our apathy.

Give us strength and courage to get our priorities straight: help us to seek your kingdom first, to live faithfully and joyfully in the world, and to be friends with the people you call us to serve.

You alone know our needs. Satisfy us with your unchanging love. In your presence may we find comfort in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, strength to meet temptation, grace to overcome the fascination of disobedience, and courage to face up to the hostility of this rebellious world.

May we honor your name not by paying it lip service, but by following you, loving in your name, speaking in your name, caring in your name.

During this Lenten journey, look deep within our hearts and our lives, and clear away all that holds us back. May our minds, spirits and bodies be a temple that is open to your presence, and may our words and our actions be transparent to your love and truth; and may we be purified in our life and mission, so that all that we do in and reveal your love to others.

May your grace surround us like a mantle upon our heads, a shawl upon our shoulders, a hand to hold our hand. And may your grace bring peace and safety to us and all people. Amen.

**Blessing: And may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon us and with us remain forever and ever.**

## Lenten Prayer

### Week 4



**Hymn:** [Come Back to Me](#) – Gregory Norbert

Verse 1. Come back to me with all your heart.  
Don't let fear keep us apart.  
Trees do bend though straight and tall,  
so must we to others' call.  
Refrain: Long have I waited for  
your coming home to me  
and living deeply our new life.

Verse 2. The wilderness will lead you  
to your heart where I will speak.  
Integrity and justice  
with tenderness  
You shall know. (Refrain)

Verse 3. Come back to me with all your heart.  
Don't let fear keep us apart. (Refrain 2x)  
Come back to me with all your heart.  
Don't let fear keep us apart.

## **Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, even when we turned away from you who have created us, even when we were oblivious, even when we followed a path fashioned of nothing but our own desires, even when we wandered far and willfully away, even when we forgot to look past our own feet and to see the wonders not of our making, even when we failed to stand in awe, to breathe thanks, to lean into your love that had waited long for us, even then you continued to care and love us.

You have set before us the path, but we have wandered on our own to try to find our way. Sometimes we are like toddlers, and we hear your call and come back. Other times, we are children testing boundaries, ignoring your call until fear finally makes us look back. And still other times we are full of youthful rebellion, demanding to be cut loose and set free, not knowing how much we still need to seek your wisdom and guidance.

But most of all, too often we think we are adults and have figured it all out and know our own way, only to stumble and stray so far. Remind us that we are always your children, that we are never fully grown up in your sight, that we always have much to learn.

Help us to seek you every day, to acknowledge that we need your wisdom and guidance, and help us to return to the path and walk with you.

Forgive our sinful ways. Teach us to be patient. Instruct us to be grateful. Guide us to be responsible and humble. As we turn ourselves around and look to the cross, let us experience your grace and your gift of new life.

## **Reading: Hosea 6:1-6**

Come, let us return to the LORD, for it is he who has torn, but he will heal us; he has struck down, but he will bind our wounds.

He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence.

What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah?

Your loyalty is like morning mist, like the dew that disappears early.

For it is loyalty that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

## **Reflection: From the Mirror of Love by Saint Aelred, abbot**

The perfection of brotherly love lies in the love of one's enemies. We can find no greater inspiration for this than grateful remembrance of the wonderful patience of Christ.

If someone wishes to love himself, he must not allow himself to be corrupted by indulging in his sinful nature. If he wishes to resist the promptings of his sinful nature, he must enlarge the whole horizon of his love to contemplate the loving gentleness of the humanity of the Lord.

Further, if he wishes to savor the joy of brotherly love with greater perfection and delight, he must extend even to his enemies the embrace of true love.

But if he wishes to prevent this fire of divine love from growing cold because of injuries received, let him keep the eyes of his soul always fixed on the serene patience of his beloved Lord and Savior.

**Antiphon:** The Lord is kind and merciful.

**Together let us pray Psalm 103**

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion.

The LORD secures justice and the rights of all the oppressed. He has made known his ways to Moses, and his deeds to the children of Israel.

Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be ...*

**Intercessory Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, you know us in our inner being. In your grace you offer us forgiveness even before we have the chance to articulate our sorrow. You embrace us in all our sinfulness and in doing so you give us the chance to start again to learn from the example you have given us in Jesus who chose the way of the Cross that all might know the depth of your love for all you have made.

Open our hearts and minds that we may grasp your forgiveness and forgive others and to live a life of reconciling love modelled on the example of Jesus Christ.

Give us the strength to persevere without counting the hurts, and to find within ourselves the capacity to keep on loving.

We pray for all those from whom we are estranged. Bring healing to strained or broken relationships. Forgive us for the times we have wronged others, whether by ignorance, neglect, or intention.

Grant us the courage and the grace to seek their forgiveness and opportunity to make amends.

Where others have wronged us, grant us a gracious spirit that we might forgive even as we have been forgiven by you, who have given us the ministry of reconciliation.

We pray for all those from whom we are estranged. Bring healing to strained or broken relationships. Forgive us for the times we have wronged others, whether by ignorance, neglect, or intention.

Make us servants of love so that others may know how much you love them, and we may know how much you love us. Amen

**Blessing: And may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon us and with us remain forever and ever.**

## Lenten Prayer

### Week 5



**Hymn:** [Yahweh, I know You are Near](#) – St. Louis Jesuits

Refrain: Yahweh, I know You are near  
standing always at my side.  
You guard me from the foe  
and You lead me in ways everlasting.

Verse 1. Lord, You have searched my heart  
and You know when I sit and when I stand.  
Your hand is upon me protecting me from death,  
keeping me from harm. (Refrain)

Verse 2. Where can I run from Your love?  
If I climb to the heavens, You are there.  
If I fly to the sunrise or sail beyond the sea,  
still, I'd find You there. (Refrain)

Verse 3. Marvelous to me are Your works.  
How profound are Your thoughts, my Lord!  
Even if I could count them, they number as the stars.  
You would still be there. (Refrain)

## **Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, Lent's days are winding down, and we are no closer to having contrite hearts. Our small complaints still loom large, and we don't hurry to show mercy, or rush to be kind. The old habits of before Lent are still alluring, and we resist the emptiness of the desert that reveals you; the places where you make yourself known to us, where you wait in the quiet for us to be ready, still feel alien.

We come before you with our brokenness and our wounds for all to see. We bring our anger, our bitterness, our unwholesome talk, and our deceitfulness. We try to do good but sometimes fail. Keep your promise to forgive us when we confess to you completely, because without you, we have no hope.

If you kept track of all our mistakes, the harmful things we say and do, the callous way we sometimes treat the people around us, the selfishness that puts our needs ahead of the needs of others, if you kept track, what chance would we have? But with unfailing love, you offer us forgiveness, complete forgiveness that erases our sins completely and allows us to begin again.

Remove from our minds and hearts whatever impediments hinder our service or dampen our joy. Increase within us that holy longing for closeness which can open our lives to a fuller and a deeper commitment to you.

Breathe life into our bones, bring freedom to our lives that we might declare with heart and soul and voice that you are our Lord and loving Father. Let our whole lives be filled with the life-breath of your Spirit, that what has lain dormant may burst into bloom, and what looks to us to be death may be revealed as but sleep before the emergence of new life.

## **Reading: Isaiah 49:8-10**

Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I answer you, on the day of salvation I help you; I form you and set you as a covenant for the people, to restore the land and allot the devastated heritages, to say to the prisoners: Come out!

To those in darkness: Show yourselves!

Along the roadways they shall find pasture, on every barren height shall their pastures be.

They shall not hunger or thirst; nor shall scorching wind or sun strike them; for he who pities them leads them and guides them beside springs of water.

## **Reflection: From the treatise on Flight from the World by Saint Ambrose, bishop**

We have died with Christ. We carry about in our bodies the sign of his death, so that the living Christ may also be revealed in us. The life we live is not now our ordinary life but the life of Christ: a life of sinlessness, of chastity, of simplicity and every other virtue. We have risen with Christ. Let us live in Christ, let us ascend in Christ, so that the serpent may not have the power here below to wound us in the heel.

Let us take refuge from this world. You can do this in spirit, even if you are kept here in the body. You can at the same time be here and present to the Lord. Your soul must hold fast to him, you must follow after him in your thoughts, you must tread his ways by faith, not in outward show. You must take refuge in him. He is your refuge and your strength.

Since God is our refuge, God who is in heaven and above the heavens, we must take refuge from this world in that place where there is peace, where there is rest from toil, where we can celebrate the great sabbath. To rest in the Lord and to see his joy is like a banquet, and full of gladness and tranquility.

**Antiphon:** Remember your mercies, O Lord.

**Together let us pray Psalm 25**

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your kindness are from of old. In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD.

Good and upright is the LORD; thus, he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, he teaches the humble his way.

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be ...*

**Intercessory Prayer:**

Almighty God and Father, have mercy on us according to your loving kindness; in your great compassion, hear our prayers.

We pray for the whole church, all leaders, and ministers, and all the holy people of God. Wash us through and through and cleanse us from our sin.

We pray for our nation, for all the nations of the earth, and for all who govern and judge. Purge us from our sin, and we shall be pure.

We pray for those who hunger, those who thirst, those who cry out for justice, those who live under the threat of terror, and those without a place to lay their head. Make them hear of joy and gladness, that those who are broken may rejoice.

We pray for those who are ill, those in pain, those under stress, and those who are lonely. Give them the joy of your saving help and sustain them with your bountiful Spirit.

In this season of Lent, we pray for those who prepare for baptism, and we pray that we all might be given the grace and strength to repent and grow closer to you. Create in us clean hearts and renew a right spirit within us.

We pray for those who have died and who have entered the land of eternal light and your abiding peace—Cast them not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from them.

As we prepare our hearts to celebrate your death and resurrection, grant us the strength and wisdom to serve and follow you, this day and always. Amen.

**Blessing: And may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon us and with us remain forever and ever.**