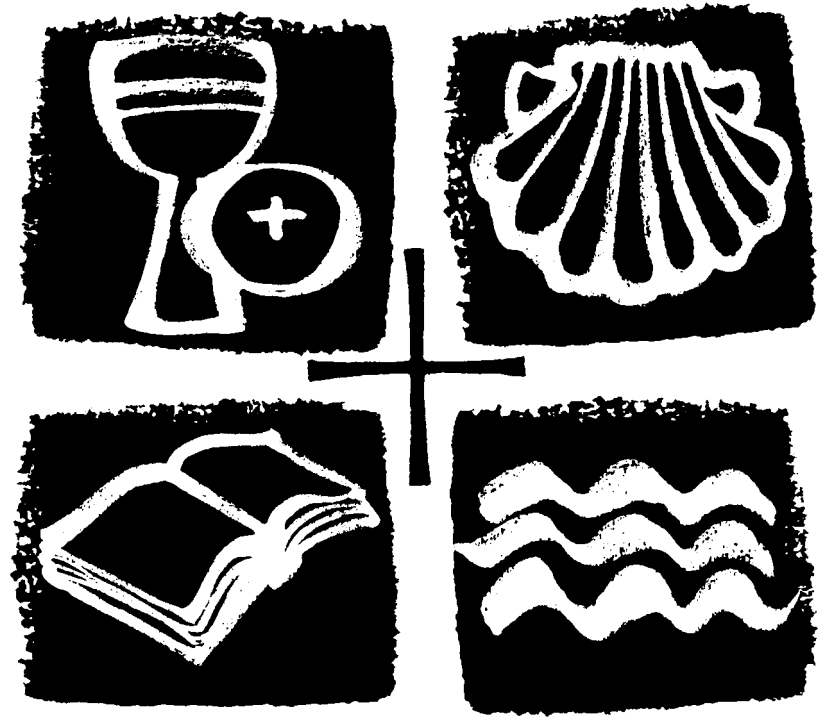


Daily Devotional



LENT 2021

Lent 2021

In years past, Lent was the season of preparation. Those who wished to be baptized were “enrolled” on Ash Wednesday. They spent the following days in prayer and preparation for their baptism, which took place on Easter Eve when the ashes of their mortality which had been marked on their foreheads would be washed away by the water of baptism and replaced by the mark of “the cross of Christ forever.”

But we’re already baptized! Why do we need to keep Lent? To remember our Baptism! To remember that even though we are dust, and to dust we shall return, God’s baptismal grace gives us the promise of everlasting life. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Romans 6:3-5

How do we keep Lent? The Ash Wednesday liturgy lists four things as “the disciplines of Lent” – repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love. Additional worship opportunities are scheduled. People are encouraged to fast, and donate the money they don’t spend on food to a charitable cause. Often bloodmobiles and food and clothing drives are scheduled during Lent.

But in these days of pandemic, things are different in terms of public gatherings like worship. But nothing can restrict our personal, internal, spiritual growth. So let’s plunge into this Lent! Plunge into our Baptism! Plunge into God’s power and grace! And let’s emerge on Easter, dripping wet, with Alleluias on our lips and joy in our hearts!

A blessed Lent to all!
Mary

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday

O Lord, throughout these forty days
You prayed and kept the fast.
Inspire repentance for our sin,
And free us from our past.

Be with us, through this season, Lord,
And all our earthly days,
That when the final Easter dawns,
We join in heaven’s praise. LBW #99, verses 1 & 4

*Return to the Lord you God, for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love . . . Joel 2:13*

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Ash Wednesday)
“Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust . . .” (Burial of the Dead)
Not very cheerful thoughts! But they echo the same idea. We are creatures. We are finite. We have had a birth date, we will have a death date, and the span of our life is the dash between the two. The temptation is to say, “Then why bother?” But there’s more to it! Much more, for us who believe in Christ Jesus! Because for us there is the promise — God’s promise of everlasting life! So the Burial of the Dead reminds us: “In the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our *brother/sister...*” — the same promise that was marked on our foreheads when we were baptized!

Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent.. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may obtain from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
(Prayer of the Day for Ash Wednesday – LBW #22)

Thursday

You strove with Satan and you won,
Your faithfulness endured;
Lend us your nerve, your skill,
Your trust in God's eternal Word.

LBW #99, verse 2



*But he answered, "It is written,
'One does not live by bread
alone, but by every word that
comes from the mouth of God.'"*

Matthew 4:4

God's Word is THE basic food for Christians. It's more important than the "strive for five" fruits and vegetables; more necessary than the food pyramid! And it comes to us in different ways. The Bible gives us God's Word in written form, passed down over the generations from the Israelites and the early Christians. Jesus is God's Word made flesh — tangible evidence of God's love and care for us! Pastor's sermons are God's Word preached and connected with our daily lives. Please take a new look at the Bible and read it daily. Don't go for long passages when you start; take small bites. Read and re-read. When you find one that touches you deeply, write it down, memorize it, post it on your mirror or computer screen — make it yours!

Prayer: Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word,
Curb those who, by deceit or sword,
Would wrest the kingdom from your Son,

And bring to naught all he has done.

LBW #230, verse 1

Friday

Though parched and hungry, yet you prayed
And fixed your mind above.
So teach us to deny ourselves
That we might know Christ's love.

LBW #99, verse 3

*But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for
those who persecute you, so you may be children of
your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:44-45*

Prayer isn't an "option" for Christians — it's standard equipment; an absolute necessity! Asking if a Christian needs to pray is like asking if a car needs an engine! (Only if you want the car to run!) Prayer powers the Christian life just as an engine does a car. Lent is a great time to get your "prayer engine" tuned up. Maybe it's a chance to learn a different style of prayer: walking or tracing a labyrinth path, praying with icons, meditating, repeating the "Jesus Prayer" — there are many possibilities!

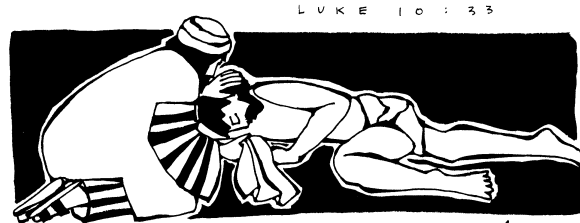
Prayer: Lord, teach us how to pray aright, with rev'ence and with fear.
Though dust and ashes in your sight, we may, we must draw near.
We perish if we cease from prayer; O, grant us pow'r to pray.
And when to meet you we prepare, Lord, meet us on our way.
LBW #438, verses 1-2



Saturday

O Master, let me walk with you
In lowly paths of service true;
Tell me your secret,
Help me bear the strain of toil,
The fret of care.

LBW #492, verse 1



BUT WHEN A SAMARITAN
SAW HIM
HE WAS MOVED WITH PITY

*He said, "The one who showed him mercy."
Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:37*

Reaching out to those in need has always been a hallmark of the Church as the Body of Christ. And it is an integral part of our identity and mission as the Baptized People of God. Each Lent there are many opportunities for people to give beyond their usual amounts and it should be for a cause beyond your regular offering – Tiger's Den food pantry, Harvest House ministries, Community of Good Neighbors, St. Luke's Mission of Mercy, ELCA World Hunger Appeal, ELCA Disaster Relief... pick one and make it your own for these 40 days! God will bless and use what you give!

Prayer:

In sickness, sorrow, want or care,
Each other's burdens help us share;
May we, where help is needed, there
Give help as though to you.

LBW #425, verse 5

Hymns and Prayers are taken from a variety of resources – the abbreviations used are:

*SBH – Service Book and Hymnal ©1958 Augsburg Publishing House
LBW – Lutheran Book of Worship ©1978 Augsburg Publishing House
WOV – With One Voice ©1995 Augsburg Fortress Publishing
W&P – Worship and Praise ©1999 Augsburg Fortress Publishing
ELW – Evangelical Lutheran Worship ©2006 Augsburg Fortress Publishing*

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