
KEEPING A HOLY LENT

PRACTICES: SELF-EXAMINATION, REPENTANCE, AND CONFESSION



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OPENING PRAYER – COLLECT FOR THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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WARM-UP CONVERSATION

- How are your disciplines/devotions going?
 - Any struggles?
 - Any insights gained?

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LITURGY AND LENT: RECAP

- Lent is not a standalone goal (a.k.a. self-help season)
- It is a preparation for Easter
 - Season of Penance and Discipline
 - Preparation for the Renewal of our own Baptismal Covenant

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From “An Exhortation” (BCP, p. 317):

- *Examine your lives and conduct by the rule of God's commandments, that you may perceive wherein you have offended in what you have done or left undone, whether in thought, word, or deed. And acknowledge your sins before Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life, being ready to make restitution for all injuries and wrongs done by you to others; and also being ready to forgive those who have offended you, in order that you yourselves may be forgiven. And then, being reconciled with one another, come to the banquet of that most heavenly Food.*

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Process:

- Recognition - I have sinned against God and/or my neighbor.
 - *“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)*
- Remorse - I am truly sorry (and not just in those cases where I have been caught).
 - *“Yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.” (2 Corinthians 7:9a)*
- Repentance - I intend to turn from my sin and amend my ways, with God’s help.
 - *“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.” (Acts 3:19)*

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Process continued:

- Restitution - I will do what I can to make right what I have wronged.
 - *“Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.” (Luke 19:8-9)*
- Renewal - I desire to grow in grace by the forgiveness of sins and the pursuit of holiness.
 - *“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8)*

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Examen Suggestions

- Be Honest
- Have a plan
 - *A contemporary reflection from a Benedictine community in England.*
 - *A contemplation of the 7 Deadly Sins from the Saint Augustine’s Prayer Book.*
 - *A traditional, “old style” examen utilizing the 10 Commandments.*
- Give yourself time
- Ask for God’s help
- Begin

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How to:

- Formally: Offices, Mass, Sacramental Confession
- Informally: Private Devotions, Spiritual Director, Accountability Partner

How Often:

- Daily: Morning/Evening Prayer, Compline
- Weekly: Sunday Mass
- Seasonally: Lent, Advent
- Occasionally: As needed

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Sacramental Confessions

- *And if, in your preparation, you need help and counsel, then go and open your grief to a discreet and understanding priest, and confess your sins, that you may receive the benefit of absolution, and spiritual counsel and advice; to the removal of scruple and doubt, the assurance of pardon, and the strengthening of your faith. ("An Exhortation", BCP p. 317)*
- Old Anglican adage: "All may, some should, none must."
 - Fr. Ben's tweaked version: "All may, *more* should, none must."
- If you do it: Bring your examen, say a prayer, and don't hold back

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The Goal

- Repentance
- Grace and forgiveness
- The fruits of holiness

To Christ our Lord who loves us, and washed us in his own blood, and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory in the Church evermore. Through him let us offer continually the sacrifice of praise, which is our bounden duty and service, and, with faith in him, come boldly before the throne of grace and humbly confess our sins to Almighty God. (“An Exhortation” BCP p. 317)

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COMING UP

- Weekly: Touch base on Lenten disciplines and devotions
- March 17 – Practices: Prayer, Fasting, and Self-denial
- March 24 – Practices: Reading and Meditating on God's holy Word.

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CLOSING PRAYER – COLLECT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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