

Spiritual Practices for Growth and Renewal

This week, we focus on the spiritual practice to **Pray ALL Ways**. Our faith tradition is rich in prayer styles and spiritual paths developed and used by the saints. Each holds its own blessing. Consider adopting a new prayer practice this week, or during Lent as a means to open your eyes to God in new ways.

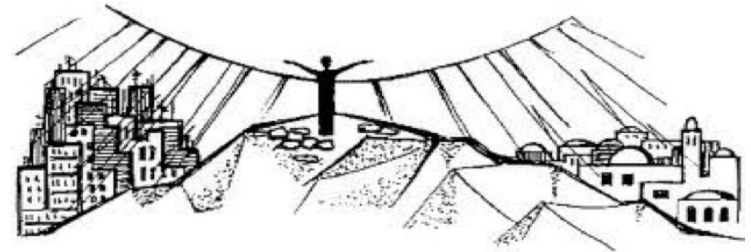
1. Add a time of *meditation* to your daily or weekly prayer. In meditation, we focus our attention and mentally let go of distractions and anxieties. Find a quiet comfortable place; focus on your breathing; relax your muscles; allow the worries of the day to drift away as you focus on deeper understandings. Here is a quote for meditation on this week's Gospel theme:

*One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

2. Check your local area for a *Taize-style* prayer service and make plans to attend with a good friend.
3. Order the book, *The Path to Resurrection* by Mary Jo Tully (<http://www.ocp.org/products/30100973>) Ideal for personal prayer, small faith discussion groups, this powerful resource reflects on the Stations of the Cross and helps us walk in the footsteps of our Savior and faithfully bear our crosses each day.



Between Sundays™ Meet You on the Hillside



First Sunday of Lent - March 9, 2014

Gathering

Leader: (Leader reminds of our ground rules:
Confidentiality, Appropriate Sharing, and Living
Fully in this Moment.)
*Do you agree to these ground rules for our time
together?*

ALL: We do.

Invocation

Leader: *Please stand. (All make the Sign of the Cross.)
Our help is in the name of the Lord.*

ALL: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the
Holy Spirit.*

**ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever
shall be. Amen.**

Hillside Questions

1. A common Lenten practice is to “give up” or “fast” from a particular food, beverage, or behavior. What is the hardest thing you’ve ever “given up” for Lent? Why?
2. This week in the scriptures, the Spirit leads Jesus into the desert. What or where do you hope the Spirit will lead you to this Lent?
3. The desert is dry. What is a part of your life that could use a little “moisture” right now?
4. (For personal reflection.) The devil tempts Jesus three times. What temptations do you currently experience in your life?

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Gracious God, as we begin this Lenten season, we ask for your mercy and grace. Guide our time of repentance, fasting and almsgiving and may these actions bring us back to you. Give us eager minds, open hearts, and willing spirits, to know, love and serve you. We ask this through Jesus the Christ - our Way, our Truth, and our Life.*

ALL: **AMEN.**

Introduction of Theme and Spiritual Practice

As we begin our Lenten journey, we focus on the spiritual practice to Pray All Ways. The Spirit led Jesus into the desert where he fasted for forty days and forty nights. Fasting can be a form of prayer as it focuses our attention on things that matter. What are the things we must personally and communally focus upon during these Lenten days?

The devil tempts Jesus to doubt his relationship with God, to doubt God’s providence, and then to abuse his power to save himself. Each of us faces the temptations to mistrust our experience of God’s love in our lives and to lose sight of the common good. Prayer offers an opportunity to refocus on the Word of God and resist our idolatries.

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

VIDEO: ***The First Sunday of Lent***
Available free at www.thefivebreads.com

Breaking Bread: Discussion/Conversation

1. Describe a time in your life when you doubted God’s presence and love. How did you overcome the temptation to doubt your experience of God?
2. Each time we say the “Our Father” we pray “and lead us not into temptation.” How do you understand that part of the prayer for yourself?
3. Jesus’ experience of overcoming temptation in the desert mirrors the Exodus story. Describe a time when God “lifted you up on wings of eagles.”
4. What are some of the “idols” that we are most tempted by in our current culture? How can we best resist these temptations?
5. Jesus declares, “One does not live by bread alone.” What sustains you when the going gets difficult in life?
6. What is a favorite prayer or spiritual practice that you intend to use during this Lenten season?

Concluding Prayer

Leader: *I invite us to stand and offer prayers for others or for ourselves. Our response will be: “Lord, hear our prayer.”*

Leader: *Gathering our prayers and praise into one, we pray in the words that Jesus gave us:*

ALL: **Our Father...
... For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. AMEN.**

Leader: Let us offer one another a sign of Christ’s peace.

Social Time