

The Lily Pad



"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys." Solomor

Renewing Our Lives Daily This Lenten Season



Have you ever thought of Lent as a yearly second chance? Each liturgical year gives us six weeks to take a long, loving look at our lives to see if our values and priorities are in line with God's desires for us. Since most of us find that we've wandered from God's path, Lent becomes that second chance, or do-over, to "return to God with our whole heart."

Ash Wednesday begins the 40-day season of Lent and reminds us of our humanness and mortality. The imposition of ashes comes with the reminder that we come from dust and we shall return to the dust. Lent is a time to reflect on the reality that we are not perfect, we make mistakes, we hurt those we love, and that we need forgiveness.

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. In Lent we contemplate our helplessness and ultimate need for God's grace. This has been the challenge of every spiritual seeker down through the ages: to free ourselves from the lure of the world and from our misguided belief that we can make it on our own. When we surrender to God, when we completely give ourselves over to God, then we are ready to embrace the full meaning of Easter.

God knows who we are and what we need. Our job is to surrender and trust that God is "driving the bus." God takes us as we are, offers to transform us into a new creation, and will lead us to Easter if we are willing to accept the freely given grace.

However, fast pace of our lives may seem to leave little time and energy for Lenten practices. But you can weave moments of spiritual awareness and service into even the busiest of schedules. It starts by incorporating Lenten practice as part of, rather than in addition to, each activity of your ordinary hectic day.

The three foundational practices of Lent are **PRAYER, FASTING, AND ALMSGIVING**.

PRAYER - It begins with daily prayer as a habit. Saying a little prayer whenever someone irritates you, cuts you off in traffic, makes life difficult, when someone does you a favor, when you experience great and friendly service, or when something joyful happens to you—you will soon find yourself praying your way through each and every day and answering your call for greater prayer during the Lenten season. This new or renewed habit makes your life flow smoother, as you gain awareness of God's presence in your life.



FASTING - There are many ways to fast. Why not fast from criticism, gossip, judging others, or passing on rumors? Why not abstain from unwarranted fear and anxiety? Quieting the inner voice that criticizes as it erodes your ability to be the self-confident, blessed person God calls you to be. Fast from missing church on Sunday and not participating in a least one ministry or outreach weekly. For many of us, the choice may not be to give something up, but to add something to our daily lives during Lent. We may commit ourselves to extra prayer time. Add daily reading of the Bible. Add an increase to your financial support of the church. Do some service for the poor or elderly once a week during Lent.

ALMS - Daily life offers countless opportunities to give of yourself to others (ALMS). Give encouragement to the doubting, give a word of praise to the insecure, show kindness to someone who could use a friend, and offer a word of thanks to those whose service of others often goes unappreciated. Give the gift of your attention to someone who simply wants to be noticed. Tell your children your favorite biblical stories when you gather at mealtime. Don't be stingy with your smiles and hugs—give them freely to everyone you meet. And most important, give your love to those close to you. Hug them, hold them, and tell them what they mean to you. In this way you open your heart to God and others.

We can also let our homes be places full of the holy things that help raise our minds and hearts to God:

- *An altar in a central place in your home during Lent and beyond where creating a sacred time and sacred place for “soaking” in God’s presence in your life which builds faith, quiets your hearts, and tunes you into the voice of the Holy Spirit.*
- *A bowl of water can be transformed into a reminder of our preparing to renew our baptismal promises.*
- *A candle, lit at each meal to remind us of the light of Christ among us in Lent and to prepare us for the new fire being lit at the Easter Vigil.*
- *A Bible in a central location, reminds us of the central place of God’s Word in our lives on this Lenten journey.*

This year’s Lent **can be** different. It will take an openness to God’s grace, a deep desire to receive what is being offered us, and a few signs and symbols to help us stay focused throughout the season. But if we do these things, God’s desire for our hearts and our desire for greater union with God will meet. Lent will no longer feel like a burden, but rather a blessing!

No matter how busy you are in life, with some greater awareness and new perspectives you can consciously ***pray, fast, and give of yourself this Lent***—and you will be ready to celebrate when a joyful dawn breaks upon you on the glorious ***Resurrection*** morning.

GOD BLESS , PASTOR CLARISSA