

+ LENT

Lenten Practices & Spiritual Disciplines

*“where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.”*

-- Matthew 6v21

FAST _ Hungering for God

EXAMEN _ Seen by God

PRAYER _ Conversation with God

LECTIO _ Reading in God

HOSTIS _ Welcoming our God

Church of the Beloved

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FAST

*“One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the
mouth of God.” Deuteronomy 7v3*

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*“The purpose of abstinence is to learn rightly to enjoy God’s gifts, when what we consume is consuming us,
what we possess is possessing us. Abstinence gives up/gives over anything that comes between ourselves and God.”
-- W.R. Inge, “Goodness and Truth”*

Forms that this kind of “fasting” could take:

- abstain from constant media stimulation,
- abstain from buying anything new in this season,
- choose natural sounds or silence,
- abstain from over packaged, over processed foods,
- abstain from compulsive dieting,
- trim an over packed schedule.

*“Behind every fitting choice of abstinence lies the question:
What do I do to excess? What attachments, compulsions control me?” -- Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast*

Food Fasting

*“For my part, I think it better that one should eat everyday, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied.”
-- “Sayings from the Desert Fathers”*

- > “Full” Fast – abstains from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water.
- > “Partial” Fast – a restriction of the diet, but not total abstention.
- > “Gradual” Fast - weekly add a new dietary restriction (ie. sugars, then fats, then carbs...)

Health Note:

- Do not fast if you are sick, traveling, under unusual stress.
- Physical conditions or illness consult with a physician.
- Reduce normal activity when fasting.

Beginners:

- Start with a partial fast.
- Give your body several weeks to adjust to regular fasting.
- Drink plenty of water.

Ask yourself, “What does Christ want to accomplish in me through this spiritual practice?”

EXAMEN

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“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.”

--Psalm 51v1

“When we feel “searched and known” by a gracious God, we are both moved and enabled to search our own hearts honestly. Self-examination, Confession and Awareness do not call us to self-hatred or self-condemnation; they open the door of our heart to cleansing, renewal and peace.”

-- Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast

Self-examination, Confession and Awareness

There are two basic truths in the healthy spiritual discipline of self-examination:

1. God utterly loves us – this the most profound and central affirmation of our faith.
2. There is an apparent brokenness in our relationship to God, others and our world.

Our Confession: We can neither earn God’s love, nor achieve our own security or perfection.

There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

“Self-examination is not an invitation to psychoanalysis, problem solving, self-lecturing, or ego absorption. The whole point of self-examination is to become more centered in God by observing the moments when we are or are not so....Self-examination is an opportunity to discover the problematic parts of your own attitudes and choices. A true spirit of confession actually increases authentic self acceptance and love.” -- Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast

> **Daily Examine** - This tool of discernment simply asks: “Am I moving toward or away from God?”

> **Journaling** - Develop a practice of daily or routine writing, capturing thoughts, faith moments, and relationships. Use this tool to grow in your contemplative awareness.

> **Life Review** - Focus on specific aspects of your life, take inventory, for example: Fears, Resentments, Emotional Security, Material Security, Social Acceptance, Sexuality, Faith, Fulfillment, Service...

What are your attitudes, behaviors, character weaknesses?

What are the effects on your relationship with others, with God?

What personal strengths did you bring to a circumstance or relationship?

What positive characteristics, traits, attitudes developed in you as a result?

Write down your observations. Wonder about connections between life seasons, events, patterns...

“A brother at Scetis committed a fault. A council was called to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to say to him, ‘Come, for everyone is waiting for you.’ So he got up and went. He took a leaking jug, filled with water and carried it with him. The others came out to meet him and said to him, ‘What is this, Father?’ The old man said to them, ‘My sins run out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another.’ When they heard that they said no more to the brother but forgave him.” -- The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

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PRAYER

“More things are wrought by prayer, than this world dreams of.” — Alfred Lord Tennyson

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Prayer is Communication: Prayer consists of both listening to God and speaking to God, a conversation!

“In prayer, we need to speak whatever truth is in us: pain and grief, failure and weakness, praise and thanks Stop and reflect, are there strong feelings in your life that you are hesitant to express in prayer? Can you identify why you hold them back?” -- Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast

Prayer is Communion: While communication is *doing* with God, communion is *being* with God.

“When I speak of communion, I mean that dimension of relationship that goes beyond words, images, or actions. Communion transcends the particularities of communication. Contemplation is the foremost expression of prayer as communion.... Resting in God, allowing the Spirit to fill and move us as God wills. It is pure receptivity and adoration. It is quiet, tender, playful, joyous.” -- Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast

“The great thing is prayer, prayer itself. If you want a prayer life, the way to get it is by praying...you start where you are and you deepen what you already have.” — Thomas Merton

Some Prayer Practices

Centering Prayer: Goes beyond words to a rest in God’s presence.

- Begin with a word that describes God’s eternal being and meditate on this.
- Sit in a silence that allows you to wait on God, without answers or a need to accomplish anything with this prayer.
- Listen for God’s voice of stillness. If your thoughts are drawn away, gently return to the in

The Jesus Prayer: (a breath prayer) Time this prayer with your regular breathing pattern.

- Inhale through the nose, and while inhaling, pray, “Lord Jesus Christ...”
- Then, while exhaling, pray, “Have mercy on me (us).” ...and repeat.

The Bidding Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)

- A prayer leader invites participants to pray both silent and spoken prayers for named situations or persons.
- With each new “bid” or invitation, the leader moves the prayers from topic to topic.
- When finished, the leader provides a closing prayer for the group.

Lord’s Prayer: Combines the components of a variety of prayers and allows for both individual and group prayer, which provides a powerful binding force of community.

Prayer Partner: Find someone who can pray with you, for you, and together, keep each other in prayer this season.

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LECTIO

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” --Psalm 119v105

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Holy Reading (Lectio Divina)

Lectio Divina began in religious communities in ancient times. Its purpose: to pray scripture, entering into its message personally, thereby opening new channels to God’s transforming presence. There are four steps to lectio divina:

- Listen to God’s Word with one’s heart.
- Meditate or wonder about this Word.
- Speak to God with one’s whole being.
- Contemplate or rest in God’s presence.

When lectio divina is used with a group, a leader is designated.

- Read the passage aloud, then leave time for silence.
- Read the passage again, asking the participants to listen for a word or phrase that stands out for them.
- Ask each person to speak their word or phrase aloud, one by one.
- Sit in silence together.
- Another person reads the same passage aloud and asks people to pay attention to either an image or feeling that comes to them.
- People share this image or feeling with the group, then sit in silence.
- Another person reads the passage a fourth time.
- People are asked to connect their word, phrase, feeling, or image to their life at present.
- All are asked to reflect silently on those connections.
- Participants are offered the opportunity to share their reflections.
- Lectio divina closes with silence and a spoken prayer for each person in the group.

Practicing Lectio in Lent

These are the Bible readings for the Sundays during Lent:

Week One - March 13:	Genesis 2v15-17, 3v1-7		Psalm 32		Romans 5v12-19		Matthew 4:1-11
Week Two - March 20:	Genesis 12v1-4		Psalm 121		Romans 4v1-17		John 3v1-17
Week Three - March 27:	Exodus 17v1-7		Psalm 95		Romans 5v1-11		John 4v5-42
Week Four - April 3:	1 Samuel 16v1-13		Psalm 23		Ephesians 5v8-14		John 9v1-41
Week Five - April 10:	Ezekiel 37v1-14		Psalm 130		Romans 8v6-11		John 11v1-45
Week Six - April 17 (Palm Sunday):			Psalm 118				Matthew 21v1-11

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HOSTIS

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“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink, or a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you, or sick or in prison and go to visit you?” --Matthew 25v37-38

Gospel Hospitality

When pastor Andre Trocme was once asked why he inspired an entire French village to risk giving shelter to Jews during WWII, he replied simply, “I could not bear to be separated from Jesus.”

What is the essence of hospitality for you? Write down your own definition.

What do you think the most important ingredients of hospitality are?

“Hospitality means letting the stranger remain a stranger while offering hospitality nonetheless. It means honoring the fact that strangers already have a relationship – rooted in our common humanity – without having to build one on intimate interpersonal knowledge, without having to become friends.” -- Parker Palmer

Hospitality at Home

- Genuinely be present with your family by giving undivided attention.
- Compliment one another.
- Include laughter, play and joy.
- Experiment with ways of inclusively welcome others into your family.

Hospitality in our Neighborhood

- Explore how you can make your neighborhood a welcoming place.
- Make the effort to acquaint yourself with your neighbors.
- Canvass your neighborhood for an “Inventory of talents.”
- Nurture awareness, fight suspicion.

Hospitality in the Workplace

- Listen openly to others’ ideas, concerns, and critiques.
- Help create a comfortable work space.
- Honor appropriate boundaries.
- Build an environment of trust and credibility.

Hospitality in Our Churches

- How does Beloved welcome our many curious visitors?
- Do we convey openness or cliques?
- How do we honor, support and encourage one another?
- Who might not feel included at Beloved?

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