



Introduction to Lent and Ash Wednesday

The Lenten season calls us to renewal, to “metanoia”, to a change of heart. It challenges us to slow down and take stock of our spiritual lives...how we interact with others, show compassion to those we meet, and see the possibilities of goodness in all creation. We return to the Lord and strive to live the values Jesus lived in daily life.

We are sinners, yes, and we also are Provident people redeemed, beloved and on the journey to wholeness. For this journey, the WPC office is offering you six prayer services, one for each week of Lent. As we did in Advent, we will be using quotes from our newest publication, *Providence and Compassion* as well as poems and prayers from the other new book, *The Art of Providence*. During the season of Lent the prayer services can be used by you individually, or with your local communities or faith sharing groups...the choice is yours. The questions for reflection at the end of each prayer service are from the *Providence and Compassion* book. Each author offered these questions as a way of integrating her particular article. There is rich material in both new publications and we are delighted to share it in this new way.

A Short Ash Wednesday Reflection

This Lent, God says, “come home to me, return to me with all your heart!”

Reflection question: What does “coming home” mean to me?

Reading: adapted from *The Art of Providence*

Imagine...a world kissed by compassion...if on a daily basis...one person in each household—Awake...to the “pressed-down, held-back, saved-for-a-rainy-day” act of kindness...and compassion. Inspired by one thought of “the other” escaping from a mouth—motivating...a kind act on the street...flashing...from one smiling face to another—whirling across neighborhoods...cities...states...countries, from one continent to another...swirling and swirling...from east to west...south to north...in a continuously flowing wave~~~~~Every day! Will you dare to risk being Providence in a small, new way...to make a difference in all of creation? --Charlene Schaaf, CDP

May our Lenten journey be one of continued spiritual growth, a time for going deeper, for seeing compassion lived out in many ways each day, and a challenge to each of us to be that compassionate presence and face of our Provident God.

Happy Lent!

Barbara McMullen, CDP

WPC Executive Director





Lenten Prayer Service for Week One

Leader: Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray and begin our Lenten journey together.

All: Give us hearts free that carry hope and believe in peace.

Song: (Your selection)

Readings: adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

“Western understandings of compassion often embrace the phrase “walking in one’s moccasins,” while the Eastern version involves “walking a mile in the footsteps of the other.” This more intimate and also somewhat exhausting picture seems often to fit the therapeutic process. It also embraces the notion that, while insurance companies love short-term therapy, actual movement toward healing and wholeness can be a long and arduous journey.”

--Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

“What nurtured Jesus’ compassion was, in part, a deep life of prayer. He maintained a personal relationship to his God, his Abba.”

--Mary Bordelon, CDP

Response: *Where Compassion Lives* -- a poem by Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

Earth pulses...
whales beach themselves
at Nauset
and are freed with human touch.
Sand speaks to sky
of redemption.
No deceit here...
Merely truth and freedom
born of compassion.
And I?
Can I find my place
in the trinity
of sand, sea and sky?
O north star
lead me there.

--Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

Lenten Prayer Service



Week One

Pause for silent reflection

Reflection questions

- What are your hopes and dreams for this Lenten journey?

- When have you been asked to walk a mile in the footsteps of the other?

- What helps you maintain a personal relationship with your Abba, God?

Closing Prayer: Chapter Prayer by Peggy Flanagan, SP+, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

Spirit of Our Loving, Provident God,
bless us as we gather for our
Lenten prayer time together.
Give us hearts free and fresh with enthusiasm,
hearts that carry hope and that believe in peace.

Give us wisdom and courage
as we cooperate with you
in creating our future,
the future to which you call us.

Fan into a burning flame the embers of your love,
so that no fear may weaken the message
we hold within and are challenged to share with one another
and to send out to the whole world.

United in truth, love, justice, and joy,
we trust that you, who have graced us in the past,
will bless us again to make your Providence
more visible at this time and in this place.
We pray in Jesus' name, *Amen*.