

LENTEN PRAYER

(candle, matches, container for burnt matches, reflective music, CBW III)

Romans 8; 9

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Let us quiet ourselves, close our eyes and contemplate the loving presence of God in our innermost being. (pause)

Psalm 139 (1 – 4, 13 – 14, 23 -24) Read slowly and reflectively.

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me,
You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from far away,
You search my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways,
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

For it was you who formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother's womb
I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...
Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is in me, places where I have gone astray and lead me in the way everlasting.

Quiet reflection. (reflective music)

How do I relate to God's presence in me?
What has God done for me in my life?
Are there signs of God's presence in a) people I met in recent weeks or b) situations I experienced? (share if desired) (remember the advantage in sharing is that it may help others to recall).

Prayer;

O sweet and loving God
When I stay asleep too long,
Oblivious to all your many blessings,
Then, please, wake me up
And sing to me a joyful song.
It is a song without noise or notes.
It is a song of love beyond words –
Of faith beyond the power of human telling
I can hear it in my soul
When you awaken me to your presence. (St. Mechthild of Saxony)

HYMN: You are Near - CBW III (487

The Lenten season is a time to examine ourselves to see where we need conversion in the likelihood of having gone astray. This task calls us to a great discipline. So, one first step could be contemplating God's presence within us since this OPENS our hearts to His power of direction.

When we are invited to carry the cross, we rightfully pray for healing and resolution but what do we do if the cross remains?

We ask Jesus for grace to "embrace" the cross, - by no means an easy task – but in essence – a REALITY. Jesus died for us; for all our sins. It is in His passion and death that Jesus reaches the culmination of His love.

We have to hold the Cross to experience the grace and mercy of God. Our prayer, then, may be not to talk too much, but with an inner attitude of faith and love of God, to SURRENDER our lives into His hands.

Prayer of St. Francis (a very common prayer, but I encourage you to read it differently today, slowly and pondering, since it can be a powerful examination of conscience.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master,

Grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For in giving, we receive;

In pardoning, we are pardoned,

And in dying, we are born to eternal life.

Luke 6; 32 – If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

Quiet reflection; (8 – 10 min)

Name 1 or 2 areas of your life that you feel need some changing for your spiritual enrichment. Recall with sincere motives.....Can we try our best to surrender these?

When you feel you are ready, quietly go to the arranged table, light a match and destroy some of that darkness of your life. It will be a start to healing. (Contemplate quietly to respect all until they are finished.)

HYMN: Lift High the Cross - CBW III (435)

STRETCH BREAK

Intercessions;

Leader; God, our Father, in this Lenten season, help us journey through our darkness so that we may experience your light and glory.

RESPONSE; God of wisdom and mercy, show us the way.

-that we may 'listen' to God speaking in us and so become more aware of His presence and love for us, we pray...(R)

-that we may face our experiences of pain, suffering and inner darkness with the face of Jesus and use it to purify our relationship with our God, we pray...

-that we may live in solidarity with the poor, oppressed and challenged people through whom God's glory manifests itself, we pray....

-that we may empty and humble ourselves to become more fully compassionate people, we pray...

-that we may find time for "solitude" where we can discern and discover our life is a gift from God, to be shared with others, we pray....

-that we may honor in prayer and action the sufferings of all persons, especially those involved in the Haitian disaster so that the comfort of our caring God may touch their hearts, we pray...

(add personal intentions..)

Leader; Generous God, guide us to your liberating way so that we may become better servants in carrying out your work. Amen.

To better carry out the work of God in our lives, Theresa of Avila says we need courage and determination from beginning to end! The virtue of "courage" helps us persevere in the face of difficulties. Courage overcomes stagnation and resistance. Having God with us and having tried to rid ourselves of stumbling blocks, we move forward in faith and with courage.

We recall the courage of the Samaritan woman at the well.

The (Samaritan) woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people. "Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done; could this be the Christ?" This brought people out of the town and they made their way towards him. Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony, "He told me everything I have done." So, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed with them for two days and many more came to believe on the strength of the words he spoke to them; and they said to the

woman, “Now we believe no longer because of what you told us,; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”

(John 4: 28 – 30, 39 – 42)

Quiet reflection : Recall some event in your life when you acted with courage. How did it change your life?

Where, in your life, do you need courage now? (again, share if desired...)

Let us pray now for strength and courage as we serve others in Jesus’ name, bearing in mind we are living witnesses of the Spirit of God in all we do.

Prayer

Lord, I pray for all who witness for you in this world;
ministers, priests, bishops,
men and women who have dedicated their lives to you,
and all those who try to bring the light of the Gospel
into the darkness of this age.
Give them courage, strength, perseverance and hope;
fill their hearts and minds with the knowledge of your presence,
and let them experience your name as their refuge from all dangers.
Most of all give them the joy of your Spirit,
so that wherever they go and whomever they meet,
they will remove the veil of depression, fatalism and defeatism,
and will bring new life to the many
who live in constant fear of death.
Lord, be with all who bring the Good News. Amen. (Henri Nouwen)

Closing Blessing;

May the Lord of peace himself, give you peace at ALL times in ALL ways. Amen.
(2nd letter of Paul to Thessalonians)

Share a sign of PEACE with each other.

HYMN; You are the Voice CBW III (576)

References: Show Me the Way – Henri Nouwen
Praying with Theresa of Avila - Rosemary Broughton
The Word Among Us – Lent 2009