



Lectio Divina for Ash Wednesday

We begin our prayer:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

(Collect, Ash Wednesday)

Reading (*Lectio*)

Read the following Scripture two or three times.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I

say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

Meditation (*Meditatio*)

After the reading, take some time to reflect in silence on one or more of the following questions:

- What word or words in this passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage comforted you?
- What in this passage challenged you?

If practicing lectio divina as a family or in a group, after the reflection time, invite the participants to share their responses.

Prayer (*Oratio*)

Read the Scripture passage one more time. Bring to the Lord the praise, petition, or thanksgiving that the Word inspires in you.



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Contemplation (*Contemplatio*)

Read the Scripture again, followed by this reflection:

What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?

When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing. How do I share the good things that God has given me? How can I be more generous in sharing my time, talent, and treasure?

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. What reward do I hope to receive from God? How can I ground my efforts more fully in my love for God and neighbor?

And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you. When has God's love surprised me? How can I open my heart to God more fully?

After a period of silent reflection and/or discussion, all recite the Lord's Prayer and the following:

Closing Prayer

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;
in the greatness of your compassion wipe
out my offense.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt
and of my sin cleanse me.

For I acknowledge my offense,
and my sin is before me always:
“Against you only have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight.”

A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence,
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

Give me back the joy of your salvation,
and a willing spirit sustain in me.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(From Psalm 51)

Living the Word This Week

How can I make my life a gift for others in charity?

Commit to Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

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