



Year A – Ash Wednesday: Preparing for Lent

Do this study on your own at home.

Ask God what He wishes to share with you from His Word and read: **Mt 6:1-6, 16-18**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, help me to make this Lent different than in past years. Give me the grace, desire, and determination to turn away from sin and open my heart fully to You. {include personal intentions here.} Amen.

Reflection: {please journal your answers so you have them to reflect on later}

1. What stood out to you from this reading?
2. As you enter Lent, what is your initial feeling of being asked to do more prayer, almsgiving, and penance?

YouTube Video: What Do You Want This Lent| Ash Wednesday with Fr. Toups (16:45 min) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukoKNoSb3Ow&list=PLeXS0cAkuTPqHL-7z8Vo8OQbGHyTj6ch3&index=2>

Reflection: {please journal your answers so you have them to reflect on later}

3. What do you want from God?
4. What do you want from Lent?
5. Do you want more?

Closing Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to hear Your voice this Lent. I give you permission to speak to me about my heart, so that I am open to receive the "more" You wish for me. Help me to clearly understand the desires You have placed on my heart. I invite You to gently guide me through this Lenten process in a way that draws me into a deeper relationship with You. In this new relationship, give me the courage to face those things in my life that need to change. {take time to reflect on the questions above and ask the Lord to point out what He desires from You the most this lent}. Amen.*

Additional Information: Link to Lenten companion referred to in video:

<https://ascensionpress.com/collections/the-ascension-lenten-companion>



Please send the Ash Wednesday Session Outline with video link to participants and ask them to watch on Ash Wednesday in preparation for Lent.

Year A – Lent Week 1: How to Face Temptation

***{Start with reviewing the previous meeting’s challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week’s challenge.}**

Let’s Begin with our Opening Prayer: *Dear Holy Spirit, we ask that You come into our hearts and give us Your peace. Help our spiritual senses to be aware of how You wish to be with us today in our thoughts and conversation. Open our ears to hear what You wish to share with us from this section of the Gospel.*

Read: **Mt 4:1-11**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, we hear in today’s reading about temptation. Shield us with Your grace from temptations and fill us with an eagerness to enter this Lent like Jesus entered the desert - with a desire to hear You and abide by Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. We hear about Jesus being tempted by the devil in the desert. In what ways does the devil tempt you/us?
2. As we enter Lent, what is your initial feeling of being asked to do more prayer, almsgiving, and penance?

YouTube Video: How to Face Temptation: First Week of Lent with Fr. Toups (6:54 min) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dd0GFUzxGPo>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

3. Fr. Toups paints a picture between using the right tool to catch a fish and how the devil uses the right tool to tempt us. What do you think he means by this? What kind of tools do you think/feel the devil uses?
4. Fr. Toups says that the tempter is trying to get us to bite on a hook and that we need to take temptation seriously. What are some things that affect our ability to turn away from temptations?
5. What implications or consequences are there when we give in to our temptations?
6. Jesus tells us not to fear temptation, but to face it with Him. Is this a concept you’ve thought of before? What would facing temptation with Jesus look like?
7. The video talks about growing in your awareness of temptation and what it sounds like in us. What do you think Fr. Toups means by this? How can we grow in awareness?

Session Challenge:

- Prayerfully reflect on this question, “What would your life look like if you weren’t struggling with the same sins?” Then ask the question, “What can I do to make this happen.” Consider writing down your reflections and focus on them throughout lent.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Dear Lord, allow this Lent to be different from previous years. We know You understand our limitations and those things that tempt us. Help us to grow in awareness of what tempts us, and remind us to always face our temptations with You at our side. Ignite our prayer this season in ways that allow us to hear and understand what it is You wish of us. Expand our hearts to grow in awareness and to walk with you to turn away from our temptations. With open hearts eager to serve You, we ask that you hear our intentions....{pause to allow others to share what’s on their hearts}. We lift these prayers and those left unsaid to Your loving care. Through the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: **Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7**; Sunday Reading 2: **Rom 5:12-19**



Year A – Week 2: Meditation: Rise and Do Not Be Afraid

***{Start with reviewing the previous meeting’s challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week’s challenge.}**

Let’s Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Mt 17:1-9**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer: Dear Jesus, You invite us to the mountaintop with You. You show us the glory of the Father and what awaits us. You also encourage us to “rise and not to be afraid.” Just as Jesus came down the mountain to face his suffering, we ask You to fill us with the courage we need to face our difficulties. Continue to walk with us as we strive to hear Your Father’s voice. In Your Name, Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. Our Gospel reading has a powerful line that reads “Rise, and do not be afraid.” The theme of God encouraging His people to leave behind fear is abundant throughout the Scriptures. Why do you think this is a major theme of God’s revelation to us?

YouTube Video: God’s Presence in Suffering: Second Week of Lent with Fr. Toups (6:47 min) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHXfOFfOWNY>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Fr. Toups talks about how God is with us in the midst of suffering. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
3. Have you been afraid to face suffering or felt alone in suffering? Why or why not? What are some reasons we may be afraid to face suffering?
4. Fr. Toups shares that there are multiple lies that are whispered to us while we suffer. What are some lies that you can think of or have experienced besides loneliness?
5. How do you know that God has been present during your suffering? In what ways was it different or could it be different to walk with Jesus while suffering?
6. Fr. Toups shares that Jesus wants to reveal His glory at the bottom of the mountain where it’s difficult and where there is suffering. Why do you think this is so? How do you think/feel this applies to Lent?
7. Oftentimes, in our daily lives at the bottom of the mountain we resist growing closer to God. Why do you think/feel we resist Him? What can we do to help us to turn to Him more readily and stop resisting?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or both}

- Make a list of your top fears and consider how God wants to walk with you in that fear.
- Consider your suffering and your sins in both deed and in your heart. Make every effort to go to confession to receive God’s grace to turn away from your sins.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear heavenly Father, open our eyes to see how we turn away from suffering and refuse to walk with You. May we be willing to take on hardships and persecutions in Your name. Give us the courage we need to come down the mountain and connect our suffering with Yours. With great trust in You, we offer You these prayers and petitions... (offer a time of silence to allow people to share their intentions). We offer You all these petitions, those that were spoken and those we hold deep within our hearts and ask, if it is Your will, that they be granted. In Your loving name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: **Gn 12:1-4a**; Sunday Reading 2: **2 Tim 1:8b-10**



Year A – Week 3: Meditation: Only God Satisfies

***{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Jn 4:5-42**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Jesus, You are the living water that quenches our thirst. May we take the time to slow down and allow You to quench our thirst. In Your name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. What is the living water spoken about in this story?

YouTube Video: When Nothing Else Will Satisfy: Third Week of Lent with Fr. Toups (5:52 min) -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riyWT_kthX4&list=PLexS0cAkuTPqHL-7z8Vo8OQbGHyTj6ch3&index=4

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Fr. Toups talks about how, just like the woman at the well, Jesus pursues us and He wants to liberate us. What do you think/feel He wants to liberate us from?
3. Do you find that you struggle with comparisons? Such as comparing yourself to others or comparing what you wish life would be versus what it actually is.
4. Can you think of reasons why comparisons of your Lent to others' Lenten experiences may not be fruitful? Are there ways that you have found to help you stop comparing?
5. Fr. Toups shares that we all have a desire for more. Why do you think God created us this way? How does it make you feel that Jesus thirsts for you? To have a relationship with you?
6. We all have a desire for more and yet many times hold back or hide parts of our hearts/lives from Jesus. In what ways do you hold back from Jesus or try to hide?
7. Fr. Toups encourages us to slow down and pay attention and ask God what we are searching for. What more do you want? What do you think/feel would make you happy?

Session Challenges: {Make every effort to do both challenges}

- Review and renew your Lenten commitments in light of this video. Be sure to release your burdens and sins by making time to go to confession this week if you haven't gone in the last 2 months.
- Like the woman at the well shared her story about Jesus, we invite you to share how ESG has impacted your life and invite one person to join one of your ESG gatherings.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Dear Lord, nothing will satisfy our deepest desires other than a relationship with You. Place a great desire on our hearts to carve out the time we need to talk with you moving forward through Lent. Just like the woman at the well, help us to bring others to the living water so that their thirst may also be filled. We ask this all through Your divine power, Amen.

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: **Ex 17:3-7**; Sunday Reading 2: **Rom 5:1-2, 5-8**

Additional Personal Prayer: Prayerfully reflect with this daily- <https://www.mcfathers.org/i-thirst.html>



Year A – Week 4: Meditation: Open Your Eyes to More

***{Start with reviewing the previous meeting’s challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week’s challenge.}**

Let’s Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Jn 9:1-41**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father You desire that we turn to You to be healed and made whole. May we allow ourselves to be loved by You, healed by You, and made whole IN You. Fill us with courage and strength to allow You to work in us. We thank You in great gratitude for all the ways You have already been at work in us. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In what ways were the blind man’s eyes opened?

YouTube Video: God Still Wants More of You: Fourth Week of Lent with Fr. Toups (8:40 min) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03dEgOoYl64&list=PLeXS0cAkuTPqHL-7z8Vo8OQbGHvTj6ch3&index=6>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. What stirs in your heart when you hear these Gospel stories?
3. Fr. Toups talks about expectations. What were your expectations of your life when you were younger? Have you had unmet expectations in your life?
4. Have you had unmet expectations from God? What is your perspective on asking God for more?
5. Fr. Toups talks about how fatigue can limit our perspective on how much more God can give us. What do you think he means, and have you experienced this?
6. Fr. Toups shares how the blind man believes that begging is as good as it gets. How he had to trust in Jesus and His power to heal him. Are there any areas of your life that you struggle with trusting God? Why or why not?
7. God is calling us to ask for more. To do this requires time in prayer. How does your prayer with God typically go? *(Leaders read: There are no right and wrong answers to these questions. We all realize that everyone’s prayer time is different and God speaks to each of us in unique ways. Let’s approach these questions in the hope of learning from one another.)* Do you spend time in silence listening for God’s whisper? Have you thought of or experienced prayer time as a back-and-forth conversation?

Session Challenges:

- In what ways do you feel stagnant in your life? In what areas of your life do you need to ask more of God? Invite Him to highlight these areas for you. Prayerfully consider if God wants you to bring Him into these areas.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Holy Spirit, give us open hearts to fully submit to You so that we can open our eyes to a new perspective in going deeper into a richer relationship with You that touches our souls. Help us to leave behind our blindness and inability to fully trust in You. At this time, we offer you these prayers and petitions (have some time of silence to allow people to share their intentions). We thank You for hearing our intentions, dear Lord, both those spoken and the ones we hold within our hearts. We ask, if it is Your will, that You will grant them. In Your name we pray. Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: **1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a**; Sunday Reading 2: **Eph 5:8-14**



Year A – Week 5: Meditation: The Battle for Life

***{Start with reviewing the previous meeting's challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Jn 11:1-45**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, we cannot comprehend Your love. We know that You are all good and wish all good things for us. May we rise to new heights with You this Lent by submitting to You fully in all areas of our lives. In Your Holy name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In this weekend's Gospel, Jesus shows us by His miracles and gestures His hatred for evil and sorrow for death. What do you find most compelling about this Gospel story?

YouTube Video: When the Battle Gets Tough: Fifth Week of Lent with Fr. Toups (8:05 min) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbIS476dZYk>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. What did you think about the story Fr. Toups shared about burning the ships?
3. A fight or battle can cause us to flee or turn to sin. Have you experienced this? How did you respond?
4. In what ways do you escape your commitment to Christ? What things do you turn to in times of temptation?
5. Do you view Lent as a small window of time in which to sacrifice? What could help you to view Lent as a steppingstone to continual change?
6. Do you feel ready for the battle?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or both}

- What is preventing you from an unbridled relationship with Jesus Christ. Consider these questions in prayer this week: What ships in your life need to be burnt? How are these ships impacting your life and others? What's stopping you from asking God for everything? What are you going to do about it?
- In response to evil and sin, perform one loving act each day

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Dear Jesus, You know how we struggle and You know the battles we are facing. Give us the determination and grace we need to burn the ships in our lives - to remove the temptations that keep us from an unbridled relationship with You. It is only through You that we can succeed. May this Lenten journey cause us to become the saints You call us to be. In Your Mighty name, Amen.

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: **Ez 37: 12-14**; Sunday Reading 2: **Rom 8: 8-11**



Leaders – If you typically send out the outline or video link prior to meeting please preview it prior to sending it to your group. Since this is a meditative type of video assess if it would be best for people to watch for the first time as a group or on their own.

Year A – Palm Sunday: A Meditation: In the Garden with Jesus

***{Start with reviewing the previous meeting’s challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week’s challenge.}**

Let’s Begin with our Opening Prayer: *Dear Holy Spirit, we ask that You come into our hearts and give us Your peace. Help our spiritual senses to be aware of how You wish to be with us today in our thoughts and conversation. Open our ears to hear what You wish to share with us from this section of the Gospel...*

Read: **Mt 26:17-46** (section of the entire Sunday reading) –<https://bible.usccb.org/> - 4/2/2023, 3/29/2026, 3/25/2029

After the Reading Conclude with: *Thank You Jesus, as we too wish to surrender everything to You. Amen*

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. What speaks to you from this section of the reading today? What does Holy Week mean to you? How has this Lent been for you?

(Leader please read to your group: This is a meditation type of video that will walk you through praying with your senses. At about 4 ½ minutes, I’m going to stop the video so we can start the mediation.

Play the video and then pause it at 4:25.

When the video is paused, read to your group: When Fr. Toups asks you to pray, please do so silently to yourself. At this time, please get comfortable in your seats. You can choose to leave your eyes open or closed while Fr. Toups walks us through the Garden of Gethsemane and brings us to the rock where Jesus is praying. Let’s take a couple of calming breaths in and out...Let go of any feelings of not being worthy to be in His presence and be assured that He knows you and loves You dearly. Resume playing the video and pause again at 13:04.

After a minute or so, resume the video playing till the end.)

YouTube Video: Preparing for Holy Week: Praying with Jesus Through the Agony in the Garden (15:42 min) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBLCts6TJoY>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. How do you feel? Peaceful, joyful, sorrowful? What are your thoughts about praying this way with Scripture and using your spiritual senses?
3. How was it to look Jesus in the eye? What was it like to have Jesus ask you to give Him everything?
4. What was it like to touch the hand of Jesus and to imagine a nail in His hand?
5. Did anything stand out to you regarding the word “consecrated” from the video today?
6. What are your plans for this next week? {encourage people to attend the Mass on Holy Thursday}

Session Challenges: {Make every effort to do all three}

- View this video again on your own, alone in a quiet place. During this time take time to review your journal notes from the Ash Wednesday session and talk to Jesus.
- Attend either Holy Thursday Mass or Good Friday liturgy or both.
- When you receive communion this week, recall touching the hand of Jesus and the gift of being able to physically touch Him in the Eucharist.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Jesus, we have walked with You through Lent and now enter this consecrated time of Holy Week. Enliven our senses this week as we participate more fully in the services. We thank You for Your sacrificial and redemptive love. Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: **Is 50:4-7**; Sunday Reading 2: **Phil 2:6-11**