

Weekly Lenten Prayers

The Lenten season begins. It is a time to be with you, Lord, in a special way, a time to pray, to fast, and thus to follow you on your way to Jerusalem, to Golgotha, and to the final victory over death.

I am still so divided. I truly want to follow you, but I also want to follow my own desires and lend an ear to the voices that speak about prestige, success, pleasure, power, and influence. Help me to become deaf to these voices and more attentive to your voice, which calls me to choose the narrow road to life.

I know that Lent is going to be a very hard time for me. The choice for your way has to be made every moment of my life. I have to choose thoughts that are your thoughts, words that are your words, and actions that are your actions. There are not times or places without choices. And I know how deeply I resist choosing you.

Please, Lord, be with me at every moment and in every place. Give me the strength and the courage to live this season faithfully, so that, when Easter comes, I will be able to taste with joy the new life that you have prepared for me. Amen.

-Henri Nouwen

Weekly Lenten Prayers

You, you giver!

You have given light and life to the world;

You have given freedom from Pharaoh to your people Israel;

You have given your only Son for the sake of the world;

You have given yourself to us;

You have given and forgiven,

and you remember our sins no more.

And we, in response, are takers:

We take eagerly what you give us;

we take from our neighbors near at hand as is acceptable;

we take from our unseen neighbors greedily and acquisitively;

we take from our weak neighbors thoughtlessly;

we take all that we can lay our hands on.

It dawns on us that our taking does not match your giving.

In this Lenten season revise our taking,

that it may be grateful and disciplined,

even as you give in ways generous and overwhelming.

Amen.

-Walter Brueggeman

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I surrender to God the nerve center of my consent. This is the very core of my will, mainspring of my desiring, the essence of my conscious thought.

I surrender to God the outlying districts of my self. These are the side streets down which I walk at night, the alleys of my desires, the parts of me that have not been laid out with streets, the wooded area, the swamps and marshlands of my character.

I surrender to God the things in my world to which I am related. These are the work I do, the things I own or that threaten me with their ownership, the points at which I carry social responsibility among my fellows, the money I earn, my delight in clothes and good food.

I surrender to God the hopes, dreams and desires of my heart. These are the things I reserve for my innermost communion; these are the fires that burn on the various altars of my life; these are the outreaches of my spirit enveloping all the hurt, the pain, the injustices and cruelties of life. These are the things by which I live and carry on. Amen.

-Howard Thurman, Meditations of the Heart

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Dear God,

Help me to stop feeling like everything is a test. A test of my compassion. A test of my fortitude. A test of my faith. Help me remember that I am not being graded. I am being guided. Guided to see that maybe I have a greater capacity to be ok when everything is horrible than I thought I did, but that it is not limitless, and it does not need to be.

Help us manage our compassion fatigue and the judgement we feel toward ourselves for having it. If you did not create our psyches to be able to withstand and respond to every tragedy and hardship happening to human beings right now, then nudge us to respond when it is our turn, and be gentle with ourselves when it's not.

Help us know when our work is done. Help us rest when we should. Help us reach out to serve when we can. Help us remember to check on our strong friends. Help us be kinder toward those who can't do as much as we can. Help us do the next right thing. And Lord, help us not forget the ice cream when we go to the grocery store next. Amen.

- Nadia Bolz-Weber

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God of Sorrows,

We cry holy for a God who is moved to tears when met with the conditions of this world. We are grateful that You are not a God who drags us out of our pain before we are ready— one who is not threatened by our tears but beholds them as holy. This Lent, help us to make space for a faithful examination of injustice, death, and decay in this world. We confess that we so often reduce salvation to the personal; let ours be a salvation tethered to the liberation of the world. And so form us into people who truly see the world, in all of its beauty and depravity. And when we find ourselves tempted to look away, steady us, that we may see with clarity our most desperate need for a Christ.

As we prepare for the memory of God hung from the cross, let us bear witness to all that requires it. Oppression, famine, war, neglect, loss, exclusion, loneliness, grief— all suspended by sin itself— let us resolve to see and name it all. That we would daily apprehend the breach between what we were created for and the distortion we see in the systems and powers of this world today. Let us grieve the chasm. And as we allow ourselves to weep with you, let us hope with you in the coming restoration of all things.

Glory to the One who met the cross with tears on his face. We look to You. Amen.

- Cole Arthur Riley

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Why O Lord, should I be preoccupied with my fears and lose courage in the face of my weakness? You give me to understand that I must fortify myself in humility, and convince myself that I can do very little alone, and that without your help I am nothing. I shall put all my confidence in your mercy, and shall distrust my own strength, convinced that my weakness is caused by my self-reliance.

You teach me not to be astonished at my struggle, for when a soul wishes to give itself over to mortification, it encounters difficulties on all sides. Does it wish to give up its ease? What a hardship! To scorn a point of honor? What a torture! To endure harsh words? Intolerable suffering!

In short, it becomes filled with extreme sadness, but as soon as it resolved to die to the world, every anguish is at an end. Amen.

-Saint Teresa of Avila