

Some Possibilities for Observing a Holy Lent

Good morning, Dear Saints of All Saints:

Lent 2023 begins in Ash Wednesday, February 22nd. Lent is a penitential season often “observed by discipline and self-denial” (BCP p. 17). Many Christians observe Lent by “giving up something” as an act of penance and penitence, and that is certainly one way of observing a Holy Lent. But there are others as well. Here are some ideas for possible Lenten spiritual disciplines that do *not* entail giving up coffee or chocolate:

- Be gentle with yourself. “Give up” judging yourself for things beyond your control; Give up unreasonably harsh self-criticism. Look in the mirror each morning/night and behold a Beloved Child of God, created in God’s own image.
- Pour your first cup of coffee, and say, “Good Morning God” with a grateful, joyful heart and a smile.
- If you struggle with prayer at home, create a home altar or sanctuary, inside or outside. Make it a pleasant and appealing place that you want to be, and include sacred objects, images and gifts. And then bless it with your prayers.
- If you struggle with noise, create an experience of silence for yourself and invite God into that silence. If you struggle with silence, practice being silent intentionally even for one minute.
- Volunteer to help with our diocesan Rio Grande Borderland Ministries’ (RGBM) shelter serving asylum-seekers at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 300 Riverside Drive here in El Paso. Contact DRG Bridge Chaplain Ana Reza at areza@dioceserg.org to volunteer.
- If you feel particularly burdened by specific sins and haven’t been able to forgive yourself as God forgives you, I would be privileged to offer you the sacramental rite of Reconciliation (individual confession). (See pp. 446-452 of the Book of Common Prayer. The Book of Common Prayer is available free of charge online at www.bcponline.org. If you don’t have internet access, let the church office know and we will get a Book of Common Prayer to you for your home use.)
- Consciously “give up” one deadly sin (Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Pride, Sloth or Wrath) and “take up” its one corresponding virtue (Kindness, Temperance, Charity, Chastity, Humility, Diligence, Patience).
- Pick a person that you just don’t like. (It’s okay: we all have them.) Set aside each day a few moments privately to try to understand that person with compassion and without judgment. (I like to try to understand what it is about *myself* that causes me to dislike a person, and I can usually let go of it when I understand it is about me.) If appropriate and possible, seek out opportunities for positive interaction with that person.
- Begin each day identifying one *new* blessing for which you are grateful, and/or end each day the same way. Consider keeping a list, so that you track your thanksgivings as we go through Lent.

- Look for and note small blessings each day as you go about your day's activities.
- Read *Forward Day By Day*, the Episcopal Church's Daily Meditation available free online at www.prayer.forwardmovement.org or in paper copies at the church.
- Or subscribe to Episcopal Relief and Development's Lenten Meditations at www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/lent/. Become a Prayer Partner with ERD. Consider a one-time or recurring gift to the Episcopal Church's work in the U.S. and around the world in response to hunger, poverty, disaster and disease.
- Join our Senior Warden Russell: When your waiting at the bank or the doctor's office, pull up the daily office or the verse of the day (see All Saints' facebook page) and use the time for prayer or meditation.
- If you are not yet doing so, write down your intercessions and set aside a particular time each day to pray them.
- Commit to inviting a friend to church with you during Lent. Consider inviting a different friend each week.
- Join Courtney and other fellow parishioners for Bible Study on the third Sunday of the month after Church. If you are a Daughter of the King and have been absent recently, come home for Lent on the second Sunday and find out how to reengage with our Daughters.
- Join us for Morning Prayer at All Saints on Facebook either real-time Mon-Fri @ 8:00am or archived at a time that works for you.
- Pray the Daily Office on your own (www.dailyoffice.app).
- If the Daily Offices for Morning Prayer (BCP pp. 37-60 or 75-102) and Evening Prayer (pp. 61-73 or 115-126) are too lengthy or ambitious, consider one of these short daily prayer disciplines: Noonday Prayer (p. 103), Order of Worship for Evening (p. 108), Compline (bedtime) (p. 127), or Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families (p. 137).
- Read and/or meditate with the Daily Office Lectionary (Bible) readings, which you can find referenced on pp, 952, 954 & 956 of the BCP or in daily office apps.
- Pray the psalms on the 30-day cycle. In the BCP Psalter (pp. 585-808), the *small italic rubric* will guide you to the day's psalms on the 30-day cycle (eg. for the first day of the month on p. 585: "*First Day: Morning Prayer*" are psalms 1-5; on p. 589: "*First Day: Evening Prayer*" are psalms 6-8; etc.). The psalms teach us about God and they also teach us about ourselves, as they reflect every possible human emotion.
- Consider practicing self-examination (confession) at the end of the day (or whatever time is best for you). Journal or keep notes if it is helpful.
- Pray and then "let go and let God", as they say in 12-step recovery programs. And remember that every new day is a new beginning; Be gentle with yourself and have a Holy and Blessed Lent!

Soli Deo Gloria, with love and prayers for a Holy Lent, David-Luke, BSG +