

Lent – A Spiritual Work

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Intention: To observe Lent according to the Spirit

Prayer: *Daily Word for the Day*

Thank you God for the gift of awareness you have given me. Thank you for everything I have received this day, especially for the freedom to be who I really am, and I know I am divine spirit. I know that I am the force that is life, the manifestation of your power that becomes the life of humans. Help me to recover my divine consciousness and to humbly accept my own divinity. I surrender my negative thoughts and feast on thoughts of love.
Amen

Affirmations: The grace of God uplifts and strengthens me.

I am a reflection of God, evolving daily into a greater expression of love!!

I have faith and know that God is working a miracle in my life right now!!

Bible Verse: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complain against another, forgive each other.” -- Colossians 3:12-13

Lesson Presentation:

Lent is a 40 day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, which was March 1st this year and ends on the day before Easter. It is a time of soul-searching, for reflection and taking stock of your life.

Lent originated in the ancient church, traditional Christians observe Lent by fasting and prayers in preparation for Easter. Lent lasts 40 days because, according to biblical accounts Moses and Jesus set a precedent where each observed a forty-day period of prayer and fasting as a preparation for spiritual work. Moses received the Ten Commandments at the conclusion of his fast. Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days of fasting, meditation and reflection before beginning his ministry.

Some religions observe Ash Wednesday by attending a service and receive ashes on their forehead in the sign of the cross. The ashes are made from the palms from the previous year Easter celebration which are burnt and blessed at a church service. This custom entered Christianity through Judaism. The use of ashes date back to the Old Testament where they were a sign of being sorry for your mistakes and errors. It was traditional in ancient times for people who were fasting and repenting to rub ashes on their forehead as an outward symbol of what they are experiencing internally.

In many countries, the last day before Lent (called Mardi Gras or Carnival) has become a last fling before the solemn time of Lent. For centuries, it was customary to fast by abstaining from meat during Lent, which is why some people call the festival Carnival, which is Latin for farwell to meat. Also, you may have heard of “Fat Tuesday” or Pun-skee, which is a Polish term and people eat this scrumptous big fat donuts!!

In the early days, traditional Christians were required to fast, eat only one full meal each day and meat was forbidden except on Sunday. You did not eat between meals. The reason for this was that quite often our appetites control our actions and to fast is to make your bodily appetites your servant rather than your master. Also, people give up such things as candy, pop, snack foods, an activity they enjoyed such as going to movies, something that they really liked as a reminder during lent to put their focus on their spiritual life rather than the physical.

Jesus taught his disciples that prayer and fasting are the sure way to spiritual power, the way to keep the soul cleansed and purified that it may feel the presence of God. Jesus revealed that fasting, like prayer, is a matter between man and God. He told his disciples they were not to be boastful, they were to make no show of their fasting. Prayer and fasting are matter of communion with God, not matters of public display. When you abstain from worldly things the mind must be filled with thoughts of God or else there is no spiritual value in fasting.

So one of the most valuable ways of observing Lenten season is to

Fast from criticism and condemnation	- feast on brotherly love
Fast from False beliefs in sickness and weakness	- feast on truth of God's presence
Fast from false beliefs in lack and limitation	- feast on God's bountiful good will
	Spiritual values in heart and mind

Experience:

“Think about the events of this week. Was there an experience that made you feel bad, alone or insecure”.
As the group is thinking, put a glass bowl (goldfish bowl) in the middle of the table. Set squeeze bottle of blue green and red food coloring near the bowl.

This glass bowl with clear water represents our minds. When we were born, our minds were as clear as this water. As we started to get older, words were said to us that may have scared us and made us feel bad.
(put in a few drops of food coloring)

Can someone give me examples of things that they remember that were said to them as a child?
(as someone shares, have them come up and add food coloring to water)

As time went on and as we got older more negative ideas were fed to us, negative experiences.
Just this week, has anyone had any experiences that added to this?
(as someone shares, have them come up and add food coloring to water)

All these words and experiences from the time we were born have darkened our minds and lives and put negativity into our consciousness. And all of this icky stuff covers up the truth of who we really are. We are Children of God, we are spiritual being with the Christ nature within.

When you feel down, what do you do to feel better? Is there anything we can do to avoid these feelings altogether?

After discussion, pour bleach water into the glass of dirty water and say:

“One way to feel better is to allow God's light into our heart. Prayer and Meditation gives us an opportunity to see things as they really exist.

The water will begin to clear up, but not all the way. Keep in mind that you will see a change for the better, but it doesn't happen all at once. (experiment with this before your meeting)

Activity:

Think about those thoughts and feelings you would like to fast from in your life and write them on your poster under the words "I Let Go Of....."

(after group has had time to write) Now we are going to replace those thoughts and feelings with positive statements. (have cut out pictures/words/phrases from magazines spread out on table)

You can write your own statements, draw pictures or use the magazine cut-outs to create your positive poster that you can keep in your room to be a reminder for you during Lent.

While you fast during Lent letting go of these negative thoughts and feelings, you can feast on saying kind words to others, helping someone, random acts of kindness, service for you community, school and church. Let this be a time to share your love with others.

Prayer/Meditation

I invite you to close your eyes and become relaxed in your chair.....let this be a time of communion with God.....recognizing our oneness with God.....the inner feel of that union with God.....
A warmth.....a lifting in consciousness.....an awareness.....an inner peace.....
All desire for anything is released.....it is just as if it were Christmas morning at the tree and we had received all our gifts, all our wishes have been granted and now all that remains is a feeling of, Thank you, Thank you, Thank you.....we rest in the presence.....we rest in the realization that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.....we rest in the Spirit.....we sit in communion and watch God pray in us.....that communion that restores harmony.....just as the normal natural thing that the river flows to the sea to feed the vast oceans of the earth.....so it is the normal and natural thing that God's grace flows to me.....
our prayer is peace-be-still.....be still.....be still.....and now rest in the silence.....
(allow several minutes of silence).....In quietness and in stillness shall be our strength.....divine ideas express and manifest themselves within us without words.....we acknowledge the Presence and feel the Divine Energy, the Divine Spark.....we go forward from this place renewed in Spirit....and we give thanks.....

Closing:

Remember our glass from the beginning of the lesson. How clear is the water now? Prayer makes a change for the better and when we allow God to work in our lives, we really see how beautiful life can be.

In a closing circle, "Please close your eyes. God please guide us this week and let our focus be on you and allow us to see all situations as they truly exist. Give us the strength to fast from negative thoughts and actions. Help us to see the Christ Spirit in all people as we move through this week. For this and all of your blessings we are grateful. Amen