

## Holy Sonnet X

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

John Donne

## *Lenten Devotional*

Lent precedes Easter, just as Advent precedes Christmas. In Advent, we walk in darkness longing for light. In Lent, we move from death to new, resurrected life. Like Advent, this a time of preparation, a fast before a feast. Indeed, we are preparing for the greatest feast of the church year-- Easter, the Day of Resurrection. Yet contrary to Advent, a season when the light grows ever brighter, Lent is a season of continued darkness. As we move closer to Easter, we also move closer to Good Friday and Jesus' suffering and death. Before we celebrate Easter, we must embrace the cross.

Lent is a time to examine our hearts, our souls, our minds; it is a time to repent and turn again; it is a time to see our great sin and our greater Savior.

This devotional is a collection of hymns, prayers, and Scripture readings, all pointing to our sinful state and our need for a Savior. They are meditations on Christ's passion; they are useful for examination, confession, repentance, and assurance of pardon. May each and all be a way to meditate this season as we prepare our hearts to worship and rejoice.

Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:  
though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red like crimson,  
they shall become like wool.

Isaiah 1:18 (English Standard Version)

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Almighty and everlasting God,  
who, of Thy tender love toward mankind, has sent Thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ,  
to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross,  
that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility:  
Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience,  
and also be made partakers of His Resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- *The Book of Common Worship*, 1946

## Ash Wednesday

### Genesis 3: 14- 19 (ESV)

The LORD God said to the serpent,  
“Because you have done this,  
    cursed are you above all livestock  
    and above all the beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
    and dust you shall eat  
    all the days of your life.  
I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
    and between your offspring and her offspring;  
He shall bruise your head,  
    and you shall bruise His heel.”  
To the woman He said,  
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
    in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
    and he shall rule over you.”  
And to Adam He said,  
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
    and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
    ‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
    in pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
    and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
By the sweat of your face  
    you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
    for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
    and to dust you shall return.”

Thursday

Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,'

and

"On their hands they will bear you up,

lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God

and Him only shall you serve."

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him.

*Notes:*

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## Friday

### Forty Days

Lent has its origins in a forty- hour fast observed from Good Friday until Easter Sunday, remembering the time that Christ was buried in the tomb. Later, this fast evolved into a forty- day liturgical season. The Church marked out this season of forty days as a time to fast, repent, worship, and consider our need for a Savior. Lent is not a scriptural imperative; it is a time set apart in the liturgical calendar that has at its core three Biblical commands: pray, fast, give.

“Lent” means “Spring”, coming from the Germanic root for “long.” This name refers to this season of the year, this time when the days are lengthening. In other languages, the name for this season is “Forty Days.” The Latin name, e.g., is Quadregesima or “Fortieth,” because the season begins on the fortieth day before Easter (excluding Sundays).

Why forty days? Perhaps the most obvious connection is that of Jesus’ 40-day fast in the wilderness, immediately after His baptism and just prior to beginning His ministry. Other “forties” in the Bible are the Israelites’ forty years wandering in the desert; the days of rain in the flood while Noah was on the ark; the number of days Moses was on Mount Sinai with the Lord receiving the Ten Commandments. Each of these forty day (or year) periods is a time of preparation and growth while waiting for something new- - a new home, a new world, a new law. So Lent is a time of preparation and growth; it is forty days of waiting and longing in darkness before Easter, that best and brightest morning, bursts anew into our lives.

## Saturday

### Joel 2: 12- 13 (ESV)

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,  
“return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
and rend your hearts and not your garments.”  
Return to the Lord, your God,  
for He is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;  
and He relents over disaster.

“Only the inner rending, the tearing of the heart, brings this joy. It lets out our sins, and lets in the clean air of God’s spring, the sunlight of the days that advance toward Easter. Rending of the garments lets in nothing but the cold. The rending of the heart which is spoken of in the lesson from Joel is that ‘tearing away’ from ourselves ... that we may turn to God and taste His mercy, in the liberty of His sons.”

- Thomas Merton, *Seasons of Celebration*, 1950

## First Sunday in Lent

### Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

*Joachim Neander, 1680; transl by Catherine Winkworth, 1863*

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!  
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;  
Praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who over all things so wondrously reigneth,  
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!  
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been  
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;  
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.  
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,  
If with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who with marvelous wisdom hath made thee,  
Decked thee with health and with loving hand guided and stayed thee.  
How oft in grief hath not He brought thee relief,  
Spreading His wings to o'ershade thee!

Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him.  
Let the Amen sound from His people again,  
Gladly fore'er we adore Him.

*The forty days of exclude Sundays. Sundays are never fast days; they are always a feast day. Every Sunday is a mini-celebration of Easter and a foretaste of the heavenly feast to come, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Thus the readings for Sundays in this devotional are hymns of praise.*