

# LENTEN GUIDE

February 2019



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# LENTEN PRAYER SERVICE

## The Basics:

While this prayer is focused on Ash Wednesday, it can be used at any time during Lent. You will need a prayer bell or chime, a candle (and matches or lighter), with the option to also include a purple cloth and a simple wooden cross or crucifix. Please sit in a circle at the same level as your community mates to create a unified prayer space. Select a prayer leader and two readers.

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# LENTEN PRAYER SERVICE

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Opening (LEADER):

[Leader lights a candle or chimes a bell]

Loving and gracious God, create in us a sense of wonder and curiosity in this time of Lent. We know that you are always with and among us and we take this time to be mindful of your presence and love for the world. AMEN.

Reader 1: A reading from the book of the prophet Joel (2: 12-18)

Even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with your whole heart,  
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;  
Rend your hearts, not your garments,  
and return to the LORD, your God.  
For gracious and merciful is he,  
slow to anger, rich in kindness,  
and relenting in punishment.  
Perhaps he will again relent  
and leave behind him a blessing,  
Offerings and libations  
for the LORD, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion!  
proclaim a fast,  
call an assembly;  
Gather the people,  
notify the congregation;

Assemble the elders,  
gather the children  
and the infants at the breast;  
Let the bridegroom quit his room  
and the bride her chamber.  
Between the porch and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD,  
weep,  
And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people,  
and make not your heritage a reproach,  
with the nations ruling over them!  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
"Where is their God?"

Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.

Reflection: Take some time to consider this strange word, 'rend'. The prophet asks us to rend our hearts...that is, to break our hearts. And let's face it: heartbreak is hard. Sad. Something we want to avoid, or, numb when it happens. But here, our God asks us to break open our hearts. When things are broken, it can make room for something new. A seed breaks through the earth to grow. And so, we are asked to break open our hearts, and turn (or return) to our God. What will break open our hearts in this time of Lent?

[Pause ~3-5 minutes for silent reflection. At the end of the reflection time, consider opening up for sharing, if folks are so inclined. When the sharing comes to a close, move on. If you choose not to do the verbal sharing, continue after a period of silence...]



# LENTEN PRAYER SERVICE CONTINUED

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Intentions (LEADER) :  
[invite/allow time for folks to speak their  
intentions] as we bring this time of reflection to  
a close, for whom or what shall we pray?

Reader 2: We now bring this reflection to a  
close with a blessing from Jan Richardson  
[recite in unison, or go around the circle each  
person reading a stanza in turn]:

Rend Your Heart - A Blessing for Ash  
Wednesday

To receive this blessing,  
all you have to do  
is let your heart break.  
Let it crack open.  
Let it fall apart  
so that you can see  
its secret chambers,  
the hidden spaces  
where you have hesitated  
to go.

Your entire life  
is here, inscribed whole  
upon your heart's walls:  
every path taken  
or left behind,  
every face you turned toward  
or turned away,  
every word spoken in love  
or in rage,  
every line of your life  
you would prefer to leave  
in shadow,  
every story that shimmers  
with treasures known  
and those you have yet  
to find.

It could take you days  
to wander these rooms.  
Forty, at least.

And so let this be  
a season for wandering,  
for trusting the breaking,  
for tracing the rupture  
that will return you

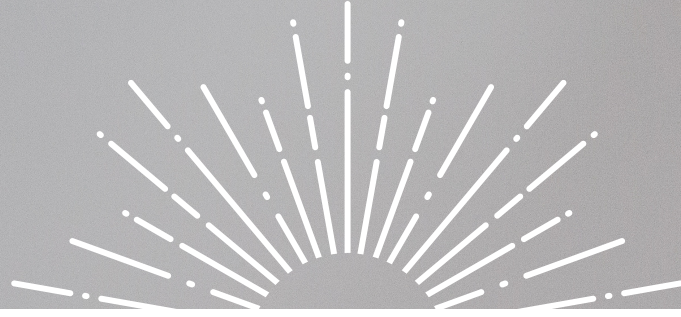
to the One who waits,  
who watches,  
who works within  
the rending  
to make your heart  
whole.

—Jan Richardson, “Ash Wednesday: Rend  
Your Heart,”



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# **SIMPLE LIVING CHALLENGES FOR LENT**

## **The Basics:**

Lent isn't only about 'giving up' things but also trying on new ways of doing and being. Here are a few simple living challenges to undertake as a community during Lent:



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# 10 SIMPLE LIVING CHALLENGES FOR LENT

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1. Do something intentional during the 40 days of Lent: Take something on — 40 days of letter writing, 40 acts of kindness, 40 phone calls to the important people in your life.

2. Commit to 40 days of guided prayer. When you first sit down in front of your computer at work, or at the very end of your workday, try a 10-minute guided prayer from Sacred Space based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.

3. Read scripture and reflect on the Bible. Read the entire Gospel of Mark in one sitting. As the shortest Gospel, it is the most concise story of Jesus' life, and the cross, a central Lenten symbol, plays an even more prominent role than in the other Gospels.

4. Prepare a reconciliation ritual. This is a great opportunity to use the actual sacrament. There are also plenty of opportunities to reconcile yourself with community members and others outside of sacramental reconciliation: ask for forgiveness from others. Forgive others. Have reconciling conversations that you have been avoiding. Plan a forgiveness circle or other reconciling ritual in your home (reach out to staff if you are seeking ideas around this theme).

5. Get to know your neighbors. Introduce yourself, plan a dinner, or bring food to an older person on your block.

6. Go vegetarian (or vegan) for Lent: This might be super easy for some in JVC; for others it's a chance to give it a try (accompany this act with learning more about meat production as it related to environmentalism and/or justice.) This article is a good start.

7. Water conservation - A bucket bath (filling a bucket and using that water to bathe) or a so-called "navy shower" (turning off the shower water while you soap up, then turning water back on to rinse off) are two examples of simple daily reminders of water as a justice issue and a great way to reduce your water footprint during Lent. Worldwide, 783 million people do not have access to clean water and almost 2.5 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation. 6 to 8 million people die annually from the consequences of disasters and water-related diseases. (accompany this with efforts read and learn more about water issues)

8. Social Media Fast: If not from all social media, just choosing one platform OR even choosing a particular time of the day to 'turn-off' >>





# LENTEN CHALLENGES CONTINUED

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9. Start a cell phone box: As a community, choose a time to put away the phones in a cell phone box. Use it for particular day(s) or hours of the day. A time to step away from that little pocket computer and connect instead to community.

10. Go on an electricity fast: After sundown no TV, radio, computers, phones, etc. (Exceptions can be made for stoves, refrigerators and other appliances which can be left plugged in, but not utilized). Use the time to sit by candlelight and chat, read quietly in the same room, maybe go to bed early. Talk about the difference you feel in the pace of life without electricity.



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A young man with dark, wavy hair is shown in profile, looking towards the left. Behind him is a stylized sunburst graphic with many thin, radiating lines. The background is a mix of a light sky and a dark, rocky foreground.

# **WAYS TO PRAY THIS LENT**

## **The Basics:**

Lent is the forty days leading up to the celebration of Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday (March 6, 2019) and concludes with Easter (Sunday, April 21)

During this important part of the Catholic liturgical calendar, JVC highly encourages spending time in individual and group reflection. Lent is a time of prayer and reflection, and as a Jesuit Volunteer, it is a time to experiment with practices that help make you feel more grounded in your spirituality, your experience as a JV, and to recognize the ways God is incarnate in your term of service. This resource is an invitation for you to stay rooted in a faith that does justice and connect with your community.

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# WAYS TO PRAY THIS LENT

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1. Take time for individual prayer: Try creating your own spiritual reflection that centers Lent.

2. Hold a community Lent Day of Reflection. Taking a day—or a couple of hours on an afternoon and step back as a community to recognize how God is at work in the lived experience of the year. A Day of Reflection could take place at any time during Lent and could be any length. Ideally, it is done in a comfortable setting outside your JV house. A support person's home, parish 'living room', or retreat center are all possibilities, as long as it's a quiet, comfortable space with a contemplative feel to it. This can be a great opportunity to call upon local support teams or spiritual liaisons to exercise their creativity and bring forth some ideas. If those planning are looking for suggestions, use the ideas in this guide!

3. Focus on Lenten themes for the weeks during your Community and/or Spirituality nights. Perhaps the idea of taking a whole day does not fit your community schedule or preferences. You can still use these ideas to be intentional with extended spirituality nights throughout Lent.

4. Roundtable sharing of family Lent / Easter traditions – Take the time to share your family traditions for Lent/Easter. Consider sharing some of them with your community: Do you discuss something to give up, or take on during the season? Do you participate in Operation Rice Bowl or another means of almsgiving? What special prayer do you offer during Lent? How do you participate in a fast? How does your family celebrate Easter? Any special foods or other traditions?

5. Stations of the Cross – This is a beautiful and rich tradition in the Church. Many parishes offer Stations on Fridays during Lent. Make it a point to attend as a community! Also, many large cities offer Social Justice stations, often on Good Friday—these are usually (but not always) organized by a local Pax Christi USA chapter. Alternatively, you can organize the Stations with/for your community. A justice-oriented Stations of the Cross is a fantastic way to merge a traditional practice with a deep hunger for justice. Some online resources to assist: Creighton University's Collaborative Ministry Office; Loyola Press – Stations of the Cross; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops – Stations of the Cross

6. Silence – This can be a time of year that brings a lot of individual and community activity, and despite the Lent themes of prayer, reflection and fasting, it can be frenzied and busy. Take some time in silence, away from technology, and just be. Perhaps you have a chance to take an extended walk outdoors, or take an extended time to journal. Some of you may be going on your community's silent retreat during (or shortly after) Lent, and this can help you prepare. Does the idea of long stretches of silence intimidate you? Read "Silence Is Hard: The Adventures of an Extrovert on a Silent Retreat"



## ADDITIONAL LENTEN RESOURCES

### **Online Prayer Resources**

Operation Rice Bowl – Catholic Relief Services annual campaign <https://www.csricebowl.org/>

Ignatian Spirituality – Lent <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/lent>

Jesuits – resources for Lenten prayer and reflection <http://www.jesuits.org/lent>

### **Online retreats/daily 'inbox' reflections**

Ignatian Solidarity Network Daily Reflections 2019. Sign up at <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/lent-2019/>

Living Lent Daily – daily Lenten reflections from Loyola Press. Sign up at <https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/lent/living-lent-daily>

Praying Lent (Creighton University Online Ministries) - <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/>

Daily Readings online (*not specific to Lent, but you can get the daily readings in your inbox!*) <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/> (sign up at bottom of page)

Catholic.Bible (*not specific to Lent, but you can access daily readings and weekly guides to Lectio Divina*) <https://catholic.bible/>

### **Articles**

- [A Busy Person's Guide to Lent – Busted Halo](#)
- [How to Prepare for Lent – IgnatianSpirituality.com](#)

### **Book Resources**

*All Shall Be Well: Readings for Lent and Easter*  
<http://www.orbisbooks.com/all-shall-be-well.html>

*Sacred Space for Lent 2019*  
<https://www.loyolapress.com/products/books/devotionals/sacred-space-lent-2019>

*Mercy in the City: How to Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Visit the Imprisoned, and Keep Your Day Job* by Kerry Weber  
<https://www.loyolapress.com/products/books/spirituality-inspiration/mercy-in-the-city>