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LENT *and*
EASTER
WISDOM
— *from* —
SAINT ALPHONSUS
LIGUORI

Daily Scripture and Prayers Together
With Saint Alphonsus' Own Words

Compiled by Maurice J. Nutt, CSsR



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PART I



READINGS
FOR LENT



DAY 1

ASH WEDNESDAY

Remember You Are Dust

Every Ash Wednesday the Church reminds us: “Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return.” The day will come when you and I must die. The same fate awaits everyone, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the good and the bad. And at the moment of death, when the soul leaves the body, it goes into eternity, while the body returns to dust.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

SCRIPTURE

Yet even now—oracle of the LORD—return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind a blessing, grain offering and libation for the LORD, your God.

JOEL 2:12–14

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, as I begin my Lenten journey of fasting, prayer, discipline, and almsgiving, I pray that you will open my mind and stir my heart to follow you more faithfully. Please make me grateful for your sacrifice on Calvary to set me free. Help me to remember that I am only dust and to dust I shall return. May my Lenten sacrifices lead me to repentance and a resolution to live my life for your greater honor and glory.

LENTEN ACTION

On this Ash Wednesday it is time to make your Lenten resolves. However, rather than giving up things like desserts, soda or alcohol, or eating red meat, perhaps you can seriously reflect on what you really need to grow spiritually. You may need to spend more time in prayer, study Scripture, sacrifice some unnecessary spending and give that money to a meaningful charity, or maybe you need to sacrifice some of your precious time to give attention to someone else. Whatever you decide, be sure you make a firm commitment to doing it throughout the season of Lent.





DAY 2

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Offer Yourself

*A*lways offer yourself to God in prayer. Offer to endure any spiritual or temporal pain for His love. Beg Him always to give you the strength to do His holy will.

TO SERVE CHRIST JESUS

SCRIPTURE

He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"

LUKE 9:22–25

PRAYER

O God, I offer myself to you. Without a doubt, I know I am nothing without you. Lord, allow me to live for you and to always walk in your will and your way. So many times I permit the distractions and temptations of this world to lead me astray. I want to lose my life for your sake and for the sake of the Gospel. In doing so I hope to gain heaven. Please, God, live in me so that I may live for you.

LENTEN ACTION

Realizing that you are nothing without God and that you have to contend with some difficulties in your life, assure yourself that God is with you. Use today to make some space to pray your way through something that has been challenging you lately. Sometimes you simply need the space to have a good long talk with God.





DAY 3

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

He Endured the Cross

He turned his back on the wealth, the honors, the pleasures of this world and embraced a life of poverty and a death marked by suffering and shame. Why? Would it not have been enough for him to beg his eternal Father to forgive man by a simple prayer? The infinite merit of this would have been sufficient to save not only one world but an infinite number of worlds. Why go to such lengths to redeem man?

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

SCRIPTURE

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

ROMANS 8:16–17

PRAYER

Redeeming Lord, I bless and praise you for calling me to be a disciple of Jesus, your Son. Give me the grace to make a new start in Christian discipleship each day, never discouraged or disabled by my faults and failings. With your divine help, I am assured I can move forward on my Lenten sojourn.

LENTEN ACTION

Have you or someone you know had to endure something very painful? Perhaps it was a health challenge, the death of a loved one, a job loss, or a broken relationship. When you think about it, that difficulty may have come and gone and yet you survived it. Take time today to write down your feelings about that experience. Think about how you felt then and how you feel now. Express your gratitude to God for seeing you through it.





DAY 4

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

No Greater Love

St. Bernard calls to our attention, most loving Jesus, that you have actually done more than this. You gave your life for us who are not your friends but your enemies, since we were in revolt against you.

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

SCRIPTURE

Incline your ear, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed. Preserve my life, for I am devoted; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; be gracious to me, Lord; to you I call all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant; to you, Lord, I lift up my soul. Lord, you are good and forgiving, most merciful to all who call on you. LORD, hear my prayer; listen to my cry for help. On the day of my distress I call to you, for you will answer me.

PSALM 86:1–7

PRAYER

Precious Lord, it is totally unfathomable that while I was sinking deep into sin, love moved and motivated you to die for me! In my transgressions you took pity on my poor soul. Yes, great love for me was your motivation. Jesus, I can never repay the debt of your love for me. But I will try to express my sincere gratitude to you by aligning my life and my will with your life and your will. I love you, Jesus.

LENTEN ACTION

Has someone ever forgiven you when you really felt you didn't deserve to be forgiven? That is exactly how our relationship is with Jesus Christ: while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us. Reflect and appreciate the times others have forgiven you when you felt you didn't deserve to be forgiven.





DAY 5

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Loving Shepherd

You, Loving Shepherd, were willing to give your own divine life to save the lives of your sheep. I happen to be one of those sheep. Do I not owe it to you, therefore, to give my life for you, inasmuch as you gave your life for me? What confidence I should have in your blood, knowing that that blood was shed to atone for my sins.

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

SCRIPTURE

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul. He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.

PSALM 23:1–4

PRAYER

Loving Shepherd, you are the source of my every need. As one of your sheep I often lose my way and become lost in the valley. My certainty is that you are always at my side with your rod and staff that give me courage. Draw me close to you, O God, so that I may never stray from you again.

LENTEN ACTION

Make today a day of gratitude. It is easy to complain about what you don't have or what you wish you had. However, think about all you do have—not just material possessions, but things that are priceless, perhaps your family and friends, your health or your faith. Thank God for being a good Shepherd and the source of your every need.