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LENT *and*
EASTER
WISDOM
— *from* —
POPE JOHN PAUL II

Daily Scripture and Prayers Together
With John Paul II's Own Words

Compiled by John V. Kruse, PhD



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DAY 1

Ash Wednesday

BEGINNING THE LENTEN JOURNEY

*R*emember, you are dust and to dust you will return. The traditional rite of distributing ashes...suggests the transitory nature of earthly life: everything passes and is destined to die. We are wayfarers in this world, wayfarers who must never forget their true and final destination: heaven....In dying on the cross, Jesus opened the way for every human being.

The entire Ash Wednesday liturgy helps us to focus on this fundamental truth of faith and spurs us to undertake a resolute journey of personal renewal. We must change our way of thinking and acting, set our gaze firmly on the face of Christ crucified and make his Gospel our daily rule of life. *Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel*: let this be our Lenten program, as we enter an atmosphere of prayerful listening to the Spirit.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, FEBRUARY 28, 2001 (ASH WEDNESDAY)

FROM DUST TO ETERNAL LIFE

Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:45–49

PRAYER

Loving God, as I begin this Lenten journey, I ask you to take me by the hand. I cannot see the road that leads to the joy of Easter. Not knowing what to expect, I am apprehensive as I set out. But I trust in you. Help me to make this a season of true conversion in my life. When we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus at Easter, I also want to celebrate the new life I have found in you through the penitential journey I now undertake. I know it will be a long, tough journey, but I entrust that journey to you with the single step that I take today.

LENTEN ACTION

Write a short prayer telling God how you personally hope to benefit from this Lenten season. It need not be more than three lines. Place the prayer somewhere you will see it frequently during Lent.





DAY 2

Thursday After Ash Wednesday

THE PATH TO JERUSALEM

*B*ehold, we are going up to Jerusalem (Mark 10:33). With these words, the Lord invites the disciples to journey with him on the path that leads from Galilee to the place where he will complete his redemptive mission. This journey to Jerusalem, which the Evangelists present as the crowning moment of the earthly journey of Jesus, is the model for the Christian who is committed to following the Master on the way of the Cross. Christ also invites the men and women of today to “go up to Jerusalem.” He does so with special force during Lent, which is a favorable time to convert and restore full communion with him by sharing intimately in the mystery of his Death and Resurrection.

LENTEN MESSAGE 2001

SHARING IN CHRIST'S DEATH

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

JOHN 12:24–26

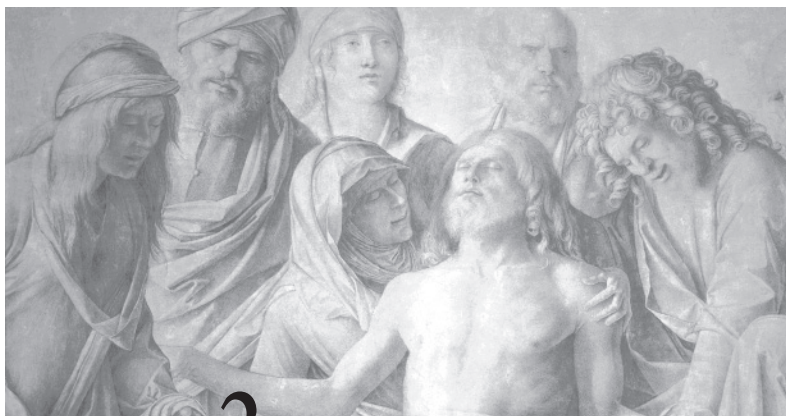
PRAYER

Christ Jesus, my inclination is to jump from Ash Wednesday to Easter. I would rather not go through what lies in between. I know this feeling is not unnatural given that you, too, asked for the cup of your sacrifice to pass by you (see Matthew 26:39). This Lenten season, give me the strength to do all that I need to do to follow you on the path to Jerusalem. I know that I must suffer and die with you if I am to rise with you on Easter. Help me to die to myself, Lord, so that I might live with you.

LENTEN ACTION

How do you need to die to yourself this Lenten season? Is there an area of your life you need to give up in order to draw closer to Christ? Identify what is holding you back from giving yourself fully to Christ and commit to doing what it takes to break down this obstacle. Often, pride prevents us from placing ourselves fully in Christ's hands. We want to be in control of our own lives. Today, make a conscious effort to surrender your will to Christ. When you need to make a decision, ask Jesus what he would want you to do. Follow what you believe is Christ's will, even if this may involve some discomfort (or a "dying to self") on your part.





DAY 3

Friday After Ash Wednesday

THE COMMAND TO LOVE

The greatest light comes from the commandment to love God and neighbor. In this commandment, human freedom finds its most complete realization. Freedom is for love: its realization through love can reach heroic proportions. Christ speaks of “laying down his life” for his friends, for other human beings. In the history of Christianity, many people in different ways have “laid down their lives” for their neighbor, and they have done so in order to follow the example of Christ. This is particularly true in the case of martyrs, whose testimony has accompanied Christianity right up to the present day. The twentieth century was the great century of Christian martyrs, and this is true both in the Catholic Church and in other Churches and ecclesial communities.

MEMORY AND IDENTITY

LOVING AS WE HAVE BEEN LOVED

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

JOHN 15:12–14

PRAYER

Lord God, you have commanded me to love you and my neighbor. The entire purpose of my life is to love. This seems simple, yet I know that at times my heart is slow to follow. Shape a loving heart in me, Lord, so that I might love you more dearly and serve my neighbor more generously. Teach me to love as you have loved me.

LENTEN ACTION

Purposely set aside your normal routine and preoccupations for a short period in order to spend time with a family member or a friend.





DAY 4

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

A TIME FOR LISTENING

*H*ow should we respond to the invitation to conversion that Jesus addresses to us in this time of Lent? How can there be a serious change in our life? First of all, we must open our hearts to the penetrating call that comes to us from the Liturgy. The time of preparation for Easter is a providential gift from the Lord and a precious opportunity to draw closer to him, turning inward to listen to his promptings deep within.

LENTEN MESSAGE 2001

HEARING THE LORD'S VOICE

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had

not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

1 SAMUEL 3:1–10

PRAYER

Patient God, often I complain that you don't speak to me. Deep down, I know the problem is that I am not listening. Sometimes there is so much noise around me that it is hard to hear your voice. Help me to shut out the racket in my life so that I can better hear you. Understand too, Lord, when I ask you to speak louder! May my increased efforts to listen to your voice aid me in my Lenten journey to deeper communion with you.

LENTEN ACTION

Go to a place where you can experience absolute silence for five to ten minutes. What does the Lord tell you during this time?





DAY 5

First Sunday in Lent

LEARNING DEPENDENCY ON GOD

The season of Lent recalls the forty years spent by Israel in the desert while on its way to the promised land. During that time the people experienced what it meant to live in tents, without a fixed abode, totally lacking security. How often they were tempted to return to Egypt, where at least there was a supply of bread even though it was the food of slaves. In the insecurity of the desert, God himself provided water and food for his people, protecting them from every danger. For the Hebrews, the experience of being total dependent on God thus became the path to freedom....

The Lenten season is meant to help believers, through a commitment to personal purification, to relive this same spiritual journey, by becoming more aware of poverty and of life's uncertainties, and by rediscovering the providential presence of the Lord....

LENTEN MESSAGE 1997

TRUSTING THE LORD

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field...will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

MATTHEW 6:25–34

PRAYER

Benevolent God, my life is full of uncertainty. How will I make it from one day to the next? How will I get all of my work done? How will the bills be paid? How will I hold my family together? It is among these uncertainties, however, that I learn my dependence on you. I cannot do it alone; I need you. During this Lenten journey, help me to trust in you, Most Faithful God.

LENTEN ACTION

Place a worry in God’s hands today. Let go of it and entrust it to his care.

