

PART I
PRAYER

**HEALING OUR
RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD**

FOR ME, PRAYER IS A SURGE OF
THE HEART; IT IS A SIMPLE LOOK
TURNED TOWARD HEAVEN, IT IS
A CRY OF RECOGNITION AND OF
LOVE, EMBRACING BOTH TRIAL
AND JOY.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

WEEK OF ASH
WEDNESDAY





WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY

ASH WEDNESDAY

BUT YOU ARE MERCIFUL TO ALL,
FOR YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS,
AND YOU OVERLOOK MEN'S
SINS, THAT THEY MAY REPENT.
. . . YOU SPARE ALL THINGS, FOR
THEY ARE YOURS, O LORD WHO
LOVE THE LIVING.

WISDOM 11:23, 26

THE INNER ROOM

Here we begin, dear friends. Ash Wednesday. Our foreheads are marked with the blackness of death while the words “Repent and believe in the gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” are spoken over us. Every single person, no matter their age or state in life, receives the same greeting, for we all are called to repent, believe, and remember. All things pass away and only the eternal remains.

We receive glimpses of this reality throughout our lives, but today we ponder it specifically as the door through which we follow Jesus out into the desert. The *Catechism* states that “interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed” (CCC 1431). We must turn away from what wounds us, destroys us, and makes us sick and turn toward God who heals us, saves us, and makes us whole.

While other people may know certain things about us, and we may know ourselves to varying degrees, only the Lord knows us fully. He alone sees us in our fullness and wholeness and loves us completely. This is why we must go into the “inner room” with him, into the hidden place, so all can be revealed.

He is inviting us into an encounter with him, in the depths of our hearts, for that is where true transformation takes place.

REFLECT

Where are you in your heart and life right now? What is Jesus wanting to heal in you as you pray, fast, and give alms this Lent?

[illegible]

[illegible]

PRAY

JESUS, HELP ME AS I BEGIN THIS
JOURNEY WITH YOU. GIVE ME AN
OPEN HEART, A WILLING SPIRIT, AND
THE COURAGE TO KEEP GOING, NO
MATTER WHAT. AMEN.

WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

PROMPT OUR ACTIONS WITH
YOUR INSPIRATION, WE PRAY,
O LORD,
AND FURTHER THEM WITH
YOUR CONSTANT HELP,
THAT ALL WE DO MAY ALWAYS
BEGIN FROM YOU
AND BY YOU BE BROUGHT TO
COMPLETION.

COLLECT FOR MASS OF THE DAY

THE SCHOOL OF LOVE

Perhaps by now you have noticed some areas of your life that need attention this Lent. When you look at the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, you may have chosen a few practices for each discipline that will help bring you into deeper freedom during this season. And that is what the disciplines are supposed to do—bring us into communion with God, ourselves, and others. As sin scatters and fragments, love brings us into communion and wholeness.

The roots of the words *discipline* and *disciple* are similar in meaning—student, training, learning. We are learning how love and the school of love never end.

During Lent, the Lord is calling us to something very intimate—far beyond the mere surface of “praying more” or “giving up dessert.” He is calling us into union with him in the heart. This is why we must allow the Lord to prompt our actions with his inspiration and further them with his help. We are not making the journey of Lent on our own or from our own will. We are being led by the Lord as the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the desert.

REFLECT

As you feel the Lord's gentle tug on your heart, where would the Lord like to encounter you this Lent? Is it to a place you've already decided or someplace new? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you.

[illegible]

[illegible]

PRAY

LORD, HELP ME TO HEAR AND TO BE
FAITHFUL TO YOUR INSPIRATIONS
THIS LENT. AMEN.

WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY
FRIDAY

HEAR, O LORD, AND BE GRACIOUS
TO ME! O LORD, BE MY HELPER.

PSALM 30:10

YOUR HEART WITH JESUS

Thousands of books have been written on prayer, but I would like to offer the guiding quote from St. Thérèse (on the part 1 title page) for your heart during this time. For that is what it is. This is a journey about your heart with Jesus and your relationship with him. Each person's relationship with Christ is unique and unrepeatable. As God loves each of us in a way he loves no other person, so too we love God in a way that no one else loves God. The shape of our heart is precious to him; he knows the distinct contours that belong to us alone.

No one can ever exhaust prayer for it is a direct encounter with the eternal, endless, indescribably beautiful God. It is the simple act of two hearts coming together—listening, sharing, receiving, responding, being, loving. Prayer heals our relationship with God. Where we are shattered by sin and disorder, prayer draws us into the heart of God.

Prayer happens in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, in activity and in silence, without ceasing.

This relationship of covenant and communion is initiated by God. Our response is just that—a response to the One who invites us and draws us. God is interested in what matters the most. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reveals, “Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. . . . It is the *heart* that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of the prayer are in vain” (CCC 2562).

There are so many beautiful and rich ways to pray, and we need them all, but it is our heart that needs to pray the most.