



'Worship at home' Sunday February 26th 2023

This is the first week of Lent,
and you might like to **set up a prayer
space** at home for the duration of Lent.
Purple is the liturgical colour for Lent,
and you might find some **purple cloth**
or ribbon. Place a **cross** and a **candle**



to aid your reflection and prayer. **Light the candle**
to remind you of the light of Christ, with us always,
even in times of wilderness and struggle.

Opening

We come to worship...

God, we come with hesitant steps and uncertain motives to sweep out the corners where sin has accumulated, and uncover the ways we have strayed from Your truth.

We come to pray...

Expose the empty and barren places where we don't allow you to enter. Reveal our half-hearted struggles where we have been indifferent to the suffering of others.

We come to be renewed...

Nurture the faint stirrings of new life, where your spirit has begun to grow. Let your healing light transform us into the image of Your Son. For You alone can bring new life and make us whole.

We come to worship... **Amen.**

~ adapted from **Godspace** <http://godspace-msa.com/2016/01/29/lenten-prayers-henri-nouwen-mother-teresa-and-more/>



The liturgical season of Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter, begins with the story of Jesus led by the Spirit to a 40-day retreat into the wilderness. There, Jesus fasted and prayed, deepening his reliance upon God. We are invited to use this time as a period of reflection and prayer, as we seek to deepen our relationship with God.

Matthew 4:1-11

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. After spending forty days and nights without food, Jesus was hungry.

Then the Devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, order these stones to turn into bread." But Jesus answered, "The scripture says, "Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks." Then the Devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the Holy City, set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, "If you are God's Son, throw yourself down, for the scripture says, "God will give orders to his angels about

you; they will hold you up with their hands, so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.' " Jesus answered, "But the scripture also says, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

Then the Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their greatness. "All this I will give you," the Devil said, "if you kneel down and worship me." Then Jesus answered, "Go away, Satan! The scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!" "

Then the Devil left Jesus; and angels came and helped him.

Good News Bible

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus had been called, baptised and affirmed by God but not yet begun his public ministry when he found himself on a spiritual retreat in the desert, struggling with some of the hard questions of life.

Who am I?

What am I called to do?

How do I do this?

In what, or who, do I place my trust?

Where is God in all this?

When have you found yourself questioning the priorities in your life?

How would you answer these questions for yourself?

Questions such as these help us explore our world and grow in faith, our purpose and our identity as God's beloved.

The temptations which Jesus experienced are similar to our own: sometimes we too are tempted to use our power, our goodwill, our faith, to further ourselves; sometimes we too are tempted to rely on our own strength, to make our own choices, even knowing that they may not be the best choices for us.

Human beings cannot live on bread alone.

We need more than gourmet dinner parties, our material possessions, our accumulated belongings ... we were created to be in relationship with God ... and with each other!

Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.

Focus your priorities. What is it that God is calling you to do? Who is it that God is calling you to be? How might you follow Jesus more closely, even if that means putting aside your own longings or desires. How might you grow in your faith, and in your relationship with God?

Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Jesus didn't take on these powers of darkness. He didn't feel the need to defend himself or prove who he was or what he could do. That triumph came later, dramatically, in the resurrection of Easter.

Jesus needed simply to trust and to know God's presence with him.

We too are invited to live in the grace of God, knowing ourselves as God's beloved. We do not have to rely on what we can or cannot do, or on achieving or being successful. We do not have to win every battle, or to prove ourselves or our faith.

What we need to do is simply to trust and to know God's presence with us.

Lent is traditionally a time of self-examination, reflection and commitment to God. Over this next 40 days, you are invited to spend time - each day if you can ... listening ... trusting ... seeking ...and knowing that you live in God's love and grace.



Prayer Gracious God, we give you thanks for Christ Jesus, human and divine, tempted, wrestling with faith and purpose, thinking about who he is and who you are, just as we do, yet confident in who he is, in you. Help us to follow his ways, to learn from him, to learn how to trust as he did, to discern as he did, to follow as he did, as we walk this way of discipleship. May we learn and grow in you this Lenten season, we pray. Amen



Psalm 32: selected verses

You are my hiding place; you will save me from trouble. I sing aloud of your salvation because you protect me. The Lord says, "I will teach you the way you should go; I will instruct you and advise you...

those who trust in the Lord are protected by his constant love. You that are righteous, be glad and rejoice because of what the Lord has done. You that obey him, shout for joy!
Good News Bible

Consider how you might use this Lenten season to deepen your relationship with God. You might choose to make a commitment each day to:

- Take five minutes of silent reflection each morning
- Read a page of a devotional or inspirational book or article
- Give thanks throughout the day
- Write a few sentences in a journal of your fears and hopes
- Contact one person just to see how they are
- Pray for a different country or group of people
- An intentional daily act of kindness for another
- Forego a cup of coffee and put aside a dollar or two to donate to UnitingWorld's Lent Event

<https://donate.unitingworld.org.au/event/lent-event/home>

Closing

As you journey through this Lenten season, may you trust in the presence of God, may you grow in Christ as you follow his ways, may you listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to live as you are called. Amen.

