

St John's, Ranmoor

Sanctuary at home

Refuge | Safety | A Holy Space



Beginning Lent

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.
Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord, your God?

Joel 2.12-14

Please, Lord, be with me at every moment and in every place. Give me the strength and courage to live this season faithfully, so that, when Easter comes, I will be able to taste with joy the new life which you have prepared for me.

The Road to Daybreak - Henri Nouwen

Welcome and introduction

Welcome to this suggested outline for how you might spend some time at home with the idea of living Lent faithfully and what that might mean in our spiritual life. If we had been gathered in church there would have been a quiet space and some candlelight. You might like to find a quiet and comfortable corner at home, away from distractions, to allow this to be a time of rest, reflection and intentional abiding in Word and prayer.

Some thoughts as we enter into the season of Lent together:

Lent comes providentially to awaken us, to shake us from our lethargy.

Pope Francis

The goal of fasting is inner unity. This means hearing, but not with the ear; hearing, but not with the understanding; it is hearing with the spirit, with your whole being.

Thomas Merton

Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring.

St Catherine of Siena

Throughout this short reflective liturgy feel free to say the words out loud or pray them in the silence of your heart. God is listening.

Greeting

Though we are scattered, we come together now to meet with God.
Let us recognize his presence with us

Silence is kept

As God's people we have gathered:
Let us worship him together.

Come O Lord and visit us in peace,
that we may rejoice before you with a perfect heart.

Praise

During which a candle may be lit:

The poem *The Bright Field* by R S Thomas read over an excerpt from *Spem in Alium* by Thomas Tallis. Click [here](#).

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

Opening prayers

In the depths of my being
I become quiet and still;
I wait for you, my God,
Source of my salvation
Amen.

You, Lord, are in this place,
Your presence fills it.
Your presence is peace.

You, Lord, are in my heart,
Your presence fills it.
Your presence is peace.

You, Lord, are in my life,
Your presence fills it.
Your presence is peace.
Amen

Psalm 51

There is just one text from scripture for this time of reflection. You could read it aloud, read it in the silence of your heart or listen to a powerful setting of the text by James Macmillan available [here](#). (it's roughly 13 minutes long, but well worth it)

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,

and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips,

and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you have no delight in sacrifice;

if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;

rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

then you will delight in right sacrifices,

in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;

then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Read again the text from scripture and the R S Thomas poem

In the time of silence which follows, reflect on your feelings as we enter this season of Lent.

You may feel prompted to focus on a verse or phrase from the scripture readings that has resonated with you.

You may want to consider words from R S Thomas' poem, reflecting on what it is that you want to *notice* this Lent.

What will you turn aside to see?

What might be the pearl of great price?

Response

A time of silence (20-30 mins)

In the silence

I receive once more

this gift of my life

from you.

Hold me in your stillness

simplify me,

and take possession of me,

my God.

Angela Ashwin

At the end of the silence:

Prayers

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will.

Ignatius of Loyola (1556)

A prayer for the end of the day

Light of the world,
Enter into the depths
of our lives.
Come into the dark
and hidden places.
Walk in the storehouse
of our memories.
Hear the hidden secrets
of the past.
Plumb the very depth
of our being.
Be present through
the silent hours,
And bring us safely
to your glorious light.



David Adam

Prayers conclude with The Lord's Prayer

Conclusion

Blessing

We are called and loved by God the Father
and kept safe by Jesus Christ.
May mercy, peace and love be ours in abundance,
from God that Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

May the light of Christ our Lord shine in all our hearts.
Amen



Interior, 1908, Wilhelm Hammershoi

Extract from *The Art of Lent* by Sister Wendy Beckett

An acceptance of the vulnerability upon which peace is based, and the weighing of significance in the light of eternity, can seem to some an abdication of life's everyday realities. Hammershoi's woman sits in an enclosed space, head bent. She could be thought to be imprisoned by her context and weakly complicit with her lack of liberty. Yet the artist shows us door upon door with a luminous window beyond. Light plays over the woman's form from behind as well as from ahead. If she chooses, she has only to stand erect and move down the waiting corridor. If she stays motionless (reading? sewing?), that is her choice. Peace is never imposed; it cannot be. It is a deliberate choice, an ordering of priorities in a moral context. We look at the options and evaluate them.