



Together on the Way of the Cross

Praying, reflecting and journeying
together during Lent



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

Introduction

The season of Lent is a time for introspection, prayer, fasting, and sharing. While many believers will embark on their own individual journey of spiritual renewal, Christian life goes beyond the privatized individualistic endeavor. Our pilgrimage on earth is both personal, communal, and even global. It is about our life together, and the call to mutually encourage one another during trying times.

We offer this guide to accompany fellow believers in affirming ‘togetherness’ within the communion of Lutheran churches worldwide. It is organized in a threefold format based on Luther’s guide for doing theology through *Oratio* (prayer), *Meditatio* (meditation), and *Tentatio* (trial/struggle). This season, in particular, offers an opportunity to immerse ourselves in a world where:

there is the *tentatio*, testing (Anfechtung). This is the touchstone. It teaches you not only to know and understand but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s word is: it is wisdom supreme. (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer*. Vol. 34, 286-87.)

Inspired by Luther, let us cultivate the art of *praying* and *reflecting together* as a communion in Christ. As we discern God’s wisdom through agonizing struggles in our world today, often wounded and marred by division, disappointment, and despair, our faith gives us hope to persevere by *journeying together* no matter what.

Indeed, God accompanies each of us step by step together on the way of the cross.

Note: All prayers are cited from *Koinonia: Services and Prayers* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004). All scriptural texts are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Ash Wednesday, 26 February 2020

Praying Together

Almighty, eternal God,
you do not wish any sinner to die,
but want all people to turn and live.
With prayer and fasting may we walk
on the way of the cross to the joy of Easter,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Reflecting Together

Isaiah 58:1-12

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Journeying Together

We begin by responding to the call to be reconciled to God. Our commitment to be agents of reconciliation in times of conflict flows out from the grace we have received.

Thursday, 27 February 2020

Praying Together

God, my friend,

you give me strength.

God, my shield, my help,

you watch over me.

You bring me out into a broad place

because you delight in me.

It is you who light my lamp.

You light up my darkness.

By you, God, I can leap over a wall.

For this I will extol you in the morning and in the evening, now and always. Amen.

Reflecting Together

Jonah 3:1-10;

Romans 1:1-7

⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Journeying Together

While our life as Christians is firmly grounded in our local and national contexts, let us also affirm that we are connected to and enriched by the communion of saints of the past and present around the world.

Friday, 28 February 2020

Praying Together

Circle us, God our shield,

keep protection near and danger afar.

Circle us, God our sun,

keep light near and darkness afar.

Circle us, God our home,

keep peace within and keep evil out.

May God embrace you and lead you with love.

Amen.

Reflecting Together

Jonah 4:1-11;

Romans 1:8-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith”.

Journeying Together

In a world full of various kinds of phobia, let us not allow fear to overrule us but rather demonstrate that we are people of faith.

Saturday, 29 February 2020

Praying Together

Eternal God,
your hand shapes our lives by grace
and rescues us from sin with love.
We pray that you guide us through this day,
shield us from all evil,
and strengthen us to do justice and kindness,
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reflecting Together

Isaiah 58:1-12;

Matthew 18:1-11

¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ²He called a child, whom he put among them, ³and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Journeying Together

Let us slow down our busy lives to spend time with the children both near and far. May we avoid seeing them as disruptions of order but rather interruptions of God’s grace.

First Sunday in Lent, 1 March 2020

Praying Together

Let all who are faithful offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.
You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.
Psalm 32:6-7

Reflecting Together

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” ¹¹Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Jesus’ test in the wilderness involved an examination with public implications. What if he gave in to Satan’s final test in his most vulnerable state, physically and psychologically? The splendor of all the kingdoms must have been hard to resist. Imagine all the ‘good’ he could have accomplished if he took a short cut by speeding things up.

Today, there are many competing forces busy propping up their empires while counterforces of resistance against such overwhelming power persist in their struggle. Is resistance futile? How can we keep our focus without being drained by distraction?

Jesus declared a *firm* NO to Satan — more than a no, it was “away with you!” But underneath Jesus’ words was a clear and *foundational* YES. ‘No’ to the splendor, the coercive power of might and empire. But ‘yes’ to the single-minded, wholehearted, fully

embodied focus of bowing down to the “Lord Your God.” His was humble worship followed by readiness to serve under a constructive and creative power. Even if that meant walking a longer path that involves death on the cross. Lent is a season where we reflect on the nature of power: is it aligned to Satan or to the Son of God? Jesus’ power does not crush the individuals, communities, and life-supporting structures, rather his power lifts up the marginalized, excluded, and weighed down.

Journeying Together

Now is the time to persevere in resisting life-crushing powers due to expansions of human empires. Let us embrace God’s life-giving power that comes with wholehearted worship and humble service.