

A Monastic Mass For the Lenten Season: An Interdenominational Service

The Liturgy

Celebrant: Our Desert Becomes a Fertile Field for Justice

the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the desert becomes a fertile field,
and the fertile field seems like a forest.
Justice will dwell in the desert
and righteousness live in the fertile field.
The fruit of righteousness will be peace;
the effect of righteousness will be quietness
and confidence forever.

-Isa 32. 15-17-

Narrators:

Lent is the forty-day "desert" period before Easter which begins this Wednesday, February 25 which is Ash Wednesday and ends on Saturday, April 11 which is Holy Saturday the day before Easter.

It is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter when the faithful rededicated themselves. By observing the forty days of Lent, Christians imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the desert for forty days as a means of rededication and preparation for public ministry by allowing our desert to become a fertile field for justice as the result of the Spirit being poured upon us from on high.

We are here today to further prepare ourselves for our own public ministry by gathering in a darkening room that symbolizes the

solitude and seclusion of the desert where Jesus retreated and prepared for ministry. Let us reflect and pray together asking God to further prepare us for our public ministry.

Let us first enter into the ancient monastic prayer office of Vespers which is a time when the heavens fade from light to darkness and when we transition from day to night. Let us use the ancient monastic practice of the antiphon for our Vesper prayers in order to emphasize the fundamental reflection of our prayers as we repeat it for emphasis. Let many of us join in by reading passages of scripture and prayers as readers.

Celebrant: - Let us pray.

(Psalm 139)

Antiphon:

Cantor: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v. 11)

All: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v. 11)

Reader 1:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

(vv 1-5)

Antiphon (all): Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v. 11)

Reader 2:

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth
your eyes saw my unformed body
(vv. 11-16a)

Antiphon (all): Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the
light around me become night (v. 11)

Reader 3:

All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand.
(vv. 16b-18a)

Antiphon (all): Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the
light around me become night (v. 11)

Celebrant: The Lighting of the Incense

Cantor: Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

(Ps 141.2)

All: Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

Reader 4:

We love you, O my God
and our only desire is to love you
until the last breath of our lives.
We would rather die loving you
than live without loving you.

The only grace we ask is to love you eternally
and if our tongues cannot say in every moment that we love you
we want our hearts to repeat it to you
as often as we draw breath.

-Taken from the prayers of the French Priest, John Vianney (1786-1859)-

All: Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

Reader 5:

O Lord Jesus, draw our hearts unto thee,
join them together in inseparable love,
that we may abide in you and you in us,
and that the everlasting covenant between us
may stand sure forever.

Let your love pierce our inward souls
that we may be intimately wounded
And have no greater lover than you.

-Taken from the prayers of The Augustinian Friar, Miles Coverdale (1488-1568)-

All: Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

A period of reflective silence

Note: As our prayers continue to rise before our God, first hear the following meditative petition sung. Then, join and meditate upon it as we sing it several times.

Cantor: sings before everyone joins in the meditation

O Lord Hear My Prayer
O Lord Hear My Prayer
When I Call Answer Me
O Lord Hear My Prayer
O Lord Hear My Prayer
Come and Listen to Me.

-Psalm 143.1ff-

A period of reflective silence

Note: The *Phos Hilaron* (Φῶς Ἰλαρόν) or **O Resplendent Light** which is below is the earliest known Christian hymn recorded outside of the Bible that is still being used today.

Cantor:

O Radiant Light,
O Holy Glory of God
the immortal blessed Father in heaven,
O Christ Jesus!
Now as the sunset comes upon us
and we see the evening lights,
we praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!
It is right at all times to sing your praise
with all the universe,
O Son of God:
You are the life of the world.

All: sing the *Phos Hilaron*

Celebrant: let us remember the events that happened during the early years of Christ's life that prepared him for ministry by reading the scriptures and giving thanks through prayer.

Reader 6:

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.¹ Let us Pray:

All: O Lord, you have called us by name while we were yet in the womb.

Reader 7:

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord", and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."² Let us Pray:

All: O Lord, Your law is written in our hearts and your name is written upon the palms of our hands and we offer ourselves holy and pleasing to you as an act of worship.

Reader 8:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

¹ Luke 2.21

² Luke 2.22-24

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."
Let us Pray:

All: O Lord, our eyes have seen your salvation.

Reader 9:

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."³ Let us pray:

All: O Lord, may a sword pierce our souls too, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

Reader 10:

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.⁴ Let us pray:

All: O Lord, we give thanks to you that we may speak about the child to all.

³ Luke 2.25-35

⁴ Luke 2.36-38

Reader 11:

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, And the grace of God was upon him.⁵ Let us pray:

All: O Lord, fill us with wisdom, so that your grace will be upon us always.

Reader 12:

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Let us pray:

All: O Lord, may we be found in the temple courts by you and our neighbors.

Reader 13:

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵ Luke 2.39-40

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.⁶ Let us pray:

All: O Lord, may we treasure all these things in our hearts and may our lives be further consecrated towards ministry. May we be found in public places sitting, listening, and talking to others that we may continue to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with you and our neighbors. Amen.

Cantor: sings once then everyone joins in the meditative petition

Bless the Lord, my soul
And bless God's holy name.
Bless the Lord, my soul
Who leads me into life.
-taken from Psalm 103-

Celebrant:

We are gathered together in the midst of a darkening room that symbolizes the solitude and seclusion of the desert where Jesus retreated and prepared for ministry. Let us continue to reflect and pray together asking God to further prepare us for our public ministry.

Lighting of the candles

Celebrant: (after the candles are lit)

Let us read together about the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness as he prepared for His ministry by confronting the three temptations that urged him to abandon his mission and calling.

⁶ Luke 2.41-52

Reader 14:

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone'⁷ but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."⁸ Let us Pray:

All: Dear God, we do not live on bread alone but from every word that comes from your mouth. You taught us to pray by saying

"Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one."⁹

Reader 15:

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"¹⁰ Let us pray:

⁷ Luke 4.1-4

⁸ Matt. 4.4

⁹ Matt. 6.11-13

¹⁰ Luke 4. 5-8

All:

Dear God

We shall worship you and serve you only.
We offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to you.
This is our spiritual act of worship
that we may serve you
with our whole heart and our whole soul
and that we may love our neighbors as ourselves.

Reader 16:

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written:

He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.¹¹ Let us pray:

All:

Dear God

You tell us through the scriptures
that we should not conform to the pattern of this world
and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds
that we may be able to test and know what your will is.¹²
You also taught us to pray that
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.¹³
Increase our faith that we may say to a mountain
Go throw yourself into the sea
And it will be done.¹⁴

¹¹ Luke 4.9-13

¹² Romans 12.2

¹³ Matt 6.10

¹⁴ Matt. 21.21

Reader 17:

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."¹⁵
Let us Pray:

All:
Dear God
Your Spirit is upon us
for you have anointed us
to preach the good news to the poor.
During these next 40 days
prepare us to further minister to others
so that we may rise with you 40 days hence
and serve you unlike ever before.
Amen.

Celebrant: Let us take a little time for silent reflection.

The Nicene Creed

Celebrant: Let us stand and profess our faith together

¹⁵ Luke 4.14-19

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Eucharist Begins

Lectio Divina: A Dialogue with God¹⁶

Celebrant: At the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples, he gave a farewell discourse¹⁷ which included the following words:

Celebrant: I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.¹⁸

All: You are the vine and we are your branches and we will remain in you in order that we will bear fruit.

Celebrant: the Spirit of Truth will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.¹⁹

All: We will listen to the Spirit of Truth so that he can take from what is yours and make it known to us.

Celebrant: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.²⁰

All: We will remain in your love and obey your commandments.

¹⁶ The practice of Lectio Divina includes dialoguing with God in prayer by hearing scripture as God speaking and responding in similar thoughts and words to what God said.

¹⁷ John 14-17.

¹⁸ John 15. 1,4.

¹⁹ John 16.12-15

²⁰ John 15. 9-11.

**An Examination of Conscience:
How Do Things Stand Between Me and God?**

Celebrant: The scriptures encourage us to examine ourselves before Holy Communion. Let us reflect upon the following words of Christ and our desire to fulfill these words

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"²¹

A brief period of reflective silence.

Celebrant: Let us pray

All: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Cantor: sings once then everyone joins in the following meditative petition Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison

²¹ Matthew 22.37-39

Celebrant:

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

All: Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Celebrant:

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

A period of silence is kept.

Celebrant: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

All: Therefore let us keep the feast

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Everyone is invited to take communion.

Cantor: Sings once then everyone joins in the meditative petition

Jesus remember me
When you come into your kingdom
Jesus remember me
When you come into your kingdom

Celebrant: Let us pray

All: The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Celebrant:

This Wednesday—Ash Wednesday—let us retreat each day into a designated “desert” as a place of preparation for the next 40 days and emerge as our savior did on Easter morning, so that we may further minister to God and others unlike ever before. Let us pray the following Psalm²² which was composed in the desert of Judah:

All:

¹O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,
my body longs for you,
in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.
⁶ On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
⁷ Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
⁸ My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.

Celebrant: Benediction

During your 40 day “desert” experience may your soul thirst for your God and your body long for your Lord each night while on your bed. And on Easter morning may your soul rise and be satisfied with the richest of foods and may your lips sing glory while in the shadow of the wings of your Risen Savior. Amen

²² Psalm 63

Acknowledgements:

The Rev. Pat O'Reilly, Celebrant
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Everyone is Invited for Light Refreshments Next Door.

**Afterwards,
Everyone is Invited to a Local Restaurant for Dinner**

The Next Monastic Mass will be on Saturday, March 7 at 5:00 pm
and every other Saturday through Pentecost
at Messiah Lutheran Church – Pasadena.

For more information visit www.urban-monk.org