

LENT, THE THREE DAYS, AND EASTER 2008

Merciful God, you called us forth from the dust of the earth; you claimed us for Christ in the waters of baptism. Look upon us as we enter these Forty Days bearing the mark of ashes, and bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the font of rebirth. May our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts. All that we do and pray is in the name of Jesus, for in his cross you proclaim your love forever and ever. –Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers



WORSHIP AND WORSHIP PLANNING

The Global Mission Lenten Worship Series for Lent 2008 is online at www.elca.org/globalmission/lent It includes sermons, orders for worship, prayers, and hymn suggestions. Bulletin covers are provided for each week as well. PowerPoint images are available together with suggestions for Lenten suppers. Everything on the site is downloadable including additional global mission resources. Many of our congregations have used these yearly resources and past years' series are still available.

Marty Haugen's **HOLDEN EVENING PRAYER** continues to be a primary worship resource for Lent. It illustrates the power of the liturgy to convey God's presence and shape God's people. If your congregation is looking for reflective worship that resonates for all ages, Holden Evening Prayer is a deeply meaningful experience.

Augsburg Fortress' **The Matthew Passion** is a collection of readings, reflections on the texts, and prayer suggestions for a "Lenten journey to the cross and resurrection."

Lent leads the Christian community from ashes to the bread and wine, the cross, the fire and water of the Three Great Days.

Many worship kits are available from publishers like C.S.S. Publishing, CTS Press, and others. These are generally thematic, include orders for worship, readings, dramas, and experiential activities. Check our catalog for titles like **Cross Examinations**, **A Closer Walk**, **Death: Doorway to Life**, **God's Love in Jesus of Nazareth**, **The Heart of the Matter** (based on Psalm 51), **Jerusalem at Passover**, and more.

Unfailing Light, a Lenten liturgy of evening prayer and communion, includes the beautiful music of Marty Haugen with texts and images from Susan Briehl.

*Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings.*

Ray McKeever's **Joyous Light** is an evening prayer service that includes a leader and musician edition as well as a congregational resource.

DRAMAS for Lenten worship include **Scripture Out Loud!** and **Can These Bones Live?** from AFP, Timothy Strommen's **Getting Mixed Up in the Passion Story** and **The Life Teachers of Samuel Jacob**, Curt Joseph's **The Temptations of Jesus** based on the temptation stories in Matthew and Luke, and many more. **Character Portrayals for Lent** by Steve Dornbusch includes scripts and videos done at Calvary Lutheran Church in Minneapolis in conjunction with Mark Holmen's Lenten Faith Mentoring Program. Check our catalog for additional ideas.

Among the best resources for worship planning for all of Lent, Holy Week, the three days, and Easter are *Sundays and Seasons 2008* and *The Three Day Feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter*, from the Worship Matters series. Preview copies available or order from Augsburg Fortress.

The drama portrayed during the six Sundays of Lent begins with the story of a tree that brought the threat of death and ends with the story of Jesus' death on a tree that brought the promise of life.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship resources include services for Passion Sunday based on the Matthew texts for Year A and a Maundy Thursday liturgy.

Liturgy: from Ashes to Fire for Cycle A focuses on the Matthew texts, on art and environment, and on the underlying sources of this central season of the church year.



REFLECTION AND STUDY

Augsburg Fortress is publishing a new series of books under the title *40 Day Journeys* by well-known writers and leaders who can be spiritual guides and mentors for our own Lenten journeys. The first three are excellent small group resources for Lenten study: *40 Day Journey with Dietrich Bonhoeffer*; *40 Day Journey with Joan Chittister*; *40 Day Journey with Kathleen Norris*. Augsburg Fortress gives congregational discounts for quantity orders.

Herb Brokering's new *Stations of the Heart* invites readers along forty-seven stops of faith for finding vision, rest and hope during the days of Lent.

A new CD, **Gospel Food for Hungry Christians: Matthew** by John Shea, may be helpful for preaching. Using selected passages from the Gospel of Matthew, Shea explores insights into the human condition and the spiritual message of Jesus for people today. Shea uses a unique method of working with the scriptural texts in ways that are preachable, teachable, and personal.

You may like to consider the topic of “prophetic voices” for Lenten reflection. We’ve compiled a collection of resources from voices both past and present calling Christians to radical action in the world. These include Jim Wallis, Joan Chittister, Munib Younan, William Sloane Coffin, Julian of Norwich, Desmond Tutu and others. The collection is called **Prophetic Voices: Witnesses to Radical Faith** and can be downloaded at www.eandsynod.org/resourcecenter/featuredhighlights

We too have been called by God to a holy life and . . . the ability to live that life is ours through the grace held out to us in Christ Jesus.

The Visual Bible includes a dramatization of the complete gospel, **The Gospel According to Matthew**, providing a wonderful visual account.

Walter Wangerin’s **Parables: A New Look at Familiar Stories** is available in both DVD and video formats.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES, a video/print series, addresses the culture through eyes of faith. Each half-hour session focuses on the significance of the “signs of the times” and their impact on our lives. Topics: the computer, the game, the mall, the television, the car, the body, and the gun.

Spirituality: An Invitation to a Closer Relationship with God is another print and video resource designed to deepen our understanding of Christian spirituality. Presenters include Garrison Keillor, Frederick Buechner, Marjory Zoet Bankson and others.



*My soul is thirsting for the living God:
when shall I see God face to face?*

The theme of temptation is a compelling topic in Bill Moyer’s series from PBS, **Genesis: A Living Conversation**. This could provide interesting fodder for getting at the temptation texts that come during the early Sundays of Lent.

The remarkable **Sourcebooks** continue to be rich wells for worship, study and reflection. They include biblical texts, prayers, quotes, and readings that chronicle the journey of the church year. We have *A Lenten Sourcebook: the Forty Days I and II*, *Triduum Sourcebook*, and *An Easter Sourcebook*.

Kerygma offers a series of printed bible studies. **Parables: Stories for Life in God’s World**, **Blessed Are You: the Beatitudes of Jesus in Scripture and Life**, and **Lord, Teach Us to Pray**.

Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?

Inviting parishioners to read and reflect on the weekly lectionary texts from Matthew is a basic and rich way to focus Lenten attention on bible study.

Classic books for study and reflection include Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (a study guide is also available); *The Cup of Our Life* by Joyce Rupp; Martin Marty's *Speaking of Trust and Places Along the Way*; *The Jesus I Never Knew* and *What's So Amazing About Grace* by Philip Yancey (which include video resources); Joan Chittister's *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, *Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light* and *Called to Question*.

We do not celebrate Lent as mere remembrance of our mortality or as a brief period of artificially-induced repentance. We celebrate it as our communal preparation for the baptismal celebration that is Easter's vigil. And we celebrate Easter's Fifty Days in order to reflect on our baptismal mission in the wider world.

May God be with us in this Lenten journey.

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