For procrastinators like myself, preparing for much of anything can be a struggle. Forty days of preparation seems insurmountable. But, you don’t eat an apple whole; you either take several bites or cut it into pieces.

Think of this supplement as your pre-sliced apple. We are happy to offer you one short devotion (bite-sized if you will) each day, with a prayer on occasion for good measure.

Utilizing this booklet as part of your Lenten preparation, we believe, can lead you to be more open to God’s grace. You may even more enthusiastically pray, fast and give alms. In this way, we hope and pray that your faith life will be enriched and that Lent, and the Easter Season, will hold more meaning for you.

Terence Hegarty, editor

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February 10 • Ash Wednesday

Revisiting and Returning

Even now...return to me with your whole heart... Joel 2:12

Might Lent’s beginning, coming so close to Valentine’s Day, call us to revisit the state of our own hearts?

God desires the whole of us, our entire hearts—whatever they may hold of joy, brokenness, dreams, anxieties, hope. Lent invites us to tend to and restore our own fragmented hearts to right relationship with God and with all of creation. From this place of whole-making, we can then also practice deeper compassion, an antidote to the cruelty and violence that arise from the heartlessness of our times. We can more fully welcome those who are disheartened—separated from heart, alienated from the center, struggling to hear the steady, rhythmic pulse of God’s tender care for each one of us.

As we enter this holy season, let us reflect on the longing of our own hearts and on God’s deepest desire for the whole of us.

Loving God, may we accompany you and may you hold us in your heart this day and always.

Sr. Chris Koellhoffer, I.H.M.

Joel 2:12-18 • Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17
2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2 • Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18
February 11 • Thursday after Ash Wednesday

**Embracing the Cross**

If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

Perhaps I have made some plans for Lent. Perhaps I have worked out what my daily cross shall be: Extra prayer times and practices I’ll take on; particular pleasures I’ll forgo; works of mercy to which I’m committed.

After all, intentionality and a thoughtful spiritual plan are good things.

But I’m struck that on this first full day of Lent, I’m also invited to consider how God’s grace moves in completely unexpected ways in quiet corners of life. The young girl Bernadette, sickly and quite poor, was doing nothing more than her daily work when she encountered a breeze, a light and a vision.

She had not planned or scheduled this. She simply went about her day, her heart open in humility, receptive to grace, out one chilly February day, gathering wood.

Jesus, may my Lenten discipline and embrace of the cross open me to your grace, whenever it comes.

Amy Welborn


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February 12 • Friday after Ash Wednesday

**Fast and Growth**

Then the disciples of John approached [Jesus] and said, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast [much], but your disciples do not fast?”

Matthew 9:14

Fasting appears in a positive light numerous times in the New Testament. Elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus takes for granted that his disciples will fast. He instructs, “...when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face” (Matthew 6:17).
Muslims observe Ramadan—a kind of four-week Islamic “Lent”—by abstaining from all food and drink during the daylight hours. This is major league stuff compared to the “giving up” that Catholics associate with Lent. Also, before age 14 and after age 59, Catholics are not required to fast and abstain at all during Lent. One may admire the Church’s leniency. Still, even a cursory internet search turns up many testimonies to the spiritual benefits of fasting. Maybe those in basic good health could grow in faith by taking more to heart the Lenten discipline of fasting.

*Lord Jesus, help me to grow closer to you during Lent.*

Mitch Finley

Isaiah 58:1-9 • Psalm 51:3-6, 18-19 • Matthew 9:14-15

*February 13 • Saturday after Ash Wednesday*

**Light in the Dark**

If you bestow your bread on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted;
Then light shall rise for you in the darkness... Isaiah 58:10

As we begin this Lenten season, we are reminded of the Church’s call to prayer, fasting and charity toward all. While it can and should be done with others, prayer and fasting tend to be solitary rituals, something we can do throughout Lent by ourselves. Reaching out to the marginalized—the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the disabled, the widowed—is something that really takes us beyond ourselves, our self-centered desires. Certainly we can always write a check or drop a bit more in the collection plate, but to truly encounter the poor, we must be among them. We need that closeness to understand their plight and to temper our ignorance if we persist in blaming them for their condition. Giving yourself to the poor will, as Isaiah tells us, allow “your light to rise in the darkness.”

Paul Pennick

Isaiah 58:9-14 • Psalm 86:1-6 • Luke 5:27-32
February 14 • First Sunday of Lent

Does the Devil Tempt Me?

Jesus...was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. Luke 4:1-2

The idea of the devil tempting people might seem like an antiquated notion. Certainly there is enough sin and weakness in people to result in plenty of temptations without blaming the devil.

But the Bible is clear in today’s gospel reading: it was the devil who tempted Jesus in the desert. Presumably, in the ages to come, he would tempt all of Jesus’ followers as well. When we look around the world today, especially at horrific actions like the murder of innocent school children, such appalling behavior must be named what it is: pure evil.

We have plenty of evidence that the devil is still tempting people in the world today. But we also have Jesus who conquered the devil in the desert and would conquer him once and for all on the cross. Whenever we are tempted, let us turn to him who won the victory for us. In him, we, too, shall conquer.

Msgr. Stephen J. Rossetti

Deuteronomy 26:4-10 • Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15

February 15 • Monday, First Week of Lent

Holy, Holy, Holy

The Lord said to Moses: “Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and tell them: Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.” Leviticus 19:1-2

What do you think of when you hear the word “holy”? Maybe the image of a saintly martyr comes to mind. Or perhaps you remember with a wistful smile a priest, deacon or woman religious, now gone to heaven, who greatly influenced you when you were young. Now those were holy people, weren’t they?
Undoubtedly, they were holy people. But we have the same opportunity—today. “Holiness is a gift that is offered to all,” Pope Francis said in November 2014, calling it “the distinctive character of every Christian.” We accept the gift (and responsibility) of holiness when we open our minds, hearts and souls to following the Lord, and doing his will.

*Lord, help me to become holy.*

Melanie Rigney

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18 • Psalm 19:8-10, 15 • Matthew 25:31-46

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**February 16 • Tuesday, First Week of Lent**

*Words of Change, Healing*

So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void... Isaiah 55:11

Like so many others, I try to spend time with Scripture every day, especially during this season of Lent. But why should we devote time to this old book? The answer, for those of us who believe, is that it is so much more than a book. Scripture is a sacred conversation with God, and it has the ability to wash over us like a healing ointment. And this moment of intimacy, Isaiah reminds us, is a circular, interactive thing. We are called to take part as we read, to allow the words to heal our hearts and change the way we live our lives. Then, and only then, can we offer God our prayers, praise and thanksgiving. In doing so, the word given to us returns to God not empty but filled with our experience of it.

*God, I give your word back to you with thanksgiving for the way it has changed me. Amen.*

Steve Givens

Isaiah 55:10-11 • Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19 • Matthew 6:7-15