

DANIEL CONNORS

Rising
with Christ

DAILY PRAYERS
for LENT, HOLY WEEK
and EASTER SUNDAY



Living with Christ Books

NOTE TO READERS

This prayerbook follows the Lectionary for Lent and can be adjusted to the calendar of any particular year. Scripture citations refer to the full gospel reading of the day. The gospels for Sundays are from Year A. Prayers for the Solemnity of St. Joseph (March 19) and the Solemnity of the Annunciation (March 25) can be found at the end of the prayers for the Second Week of Lent.

TWENTY-THIRD PUBLICATIONS

A Division of Bayard

One Montauk Avenue, Suite 200

New London, CT 06320

(860) 437-3012 or (800) 321-0411

www.23rdpublications.com

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ISBN: 978-1-62785-119-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015952052

Printed in the U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

I have experienced many Lents, but I never truly understood the power of the season until I helped a group of the elect in my parish prepare for baptism.

Lent was made for the elect—an intense retreat to consider what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus and part of his body. It is their time to prepare to accept his invitation to be immersed in his life, death, and resurrection through the Easter sacraments.

And as I journeyed with the elect, I realized that I too was thinking and praying about what it means for me to be baptized and confirmed, to be Jesus' disciple, and to share his eucharistic life. When I renew my baptismal promises at Easter, when I come to the Easter table of the Lord, what am I committing myself to being and doing? What is God asking of me? What am I asking of God?

These prayers came out of my lenten journey. I hope they will help inspire your own prayers as we all seek to live ever more deeply in Christ, our Lord.



ASH WEDNESDAY

“When you give alms...when you fast...when you pray...” (MATTHEW 6:1–6, 16–18)

Jesus, another Lent begins. I don't feel ready, but then, opportunities to grow as a disciple often seem to take me by surprise.

No matter how old I get, I am still only a beginner in following you. There is always more to learn and more opportunities to go deeper into your life and love.

Lord, I frequently fail to live as a true disciple. But you never stop calling to me with love and compassion. You never stop calling out: “Follow me.”

This Lent, help me to see the truth about myself and to hear your call. Let me receive the lenten cross of ashes as a joyous blessing, a sign that I have another chance to refocus and reprioritize, another opportunity to practice being what I am: a baptized member of your body, living and sharing your redemptive life through all the days of my own.

Six weeks from now, Jesus, I will join

with your church to renew my baptismal promises—my commitment to being your disciple. Help me to prepare well, so that my blessing with ashes may be washed in the even greater blessing of your waters of rebirth.



THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

“If anyone wishes to come after me...” (LUKE 9:22–25)

Jesus, I remember when my wife and I were so excited about the prospect of becoming parents. We read all the books. But when the day came and that miraculous infant was in our arms, we quickly found out how unprepared we were! But we learned. Slowly, often sleeplessly, we stopped being in love with the theoretical idea of parenthood and fell in love with our son.

In the same way, Jesus, I know how easy it is for me to be in love with the idea of being a disciple, and how much harder it is to really be one. I can't stay on the sidelines. I can't just

read it in a book. If I am to follow you, I have to actually do it—take up my cross and learn to die to myself every day. Easy to say—hard and sometimes scary to do.

Thank you, Jesus, for all you do to help me really live as a disciple, for it is the only kind of life that leads to joy.



FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away.” (MATTHEW 9:14–15)

Jesus, trying to live in what theologians call the “already and the not yet” is a challenge for me. You have conquered sin and death, and yet sin seems to be everywhere, and I still have to die. Your kingdom is established but not fully. You are always with me, and yet sometimes I ache to see your face and feel your presence. I can’t celebrate Lent as if you haven’t already risen, and I can’t celebrate Easter without remembering the cross.

Lord, help me to remember that even during our most joyous celebrations there are people around me suffering in pain and sorrow. Help me to remember that even in the most sorrowful moments there are seeds of hope and joy. Help me to see that every Eucharist gives me an opportunity to live more deeply in the paschal mystery: the cross *and* the resurrection, the fasting for the sake of others *and* the feasting in the joy of new life.

Sometimes, Jesus, you are very close; at other times, you seem very far away. Help me to fast and feast in all the changing circumstances of my life. Above all, Jesus, help me to live in hope.



SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

“Those who are healthy do not need a physician.”

(LUKE 5:27–32)

Lord Jesus, I am not a good judge of my own health. I tend to fret over small things; I jump immediately to an imagined diagnosis of bone

cancer whenever my elbow hurts. And yet I once put off calling the doctor and thus almost died of pneumonia.

I fear I am not much better at judging my spiritual health. But you make it clear over and over that you have come to call sinners. So if I am going to respond to you this Lent, I've got to cultivate a realistic awareness of my own sinfulness—neither wallowing in guilt nor ignoring my failings.

Jesus, divine physician, help me this Lent to take a close, honest, and fearless look at myself. Help me to see the ways my thoughts and actions keep me from living the life you offer. Help me to break away from all the ways I rationalize and even lie to myself about what is really right and wrong. Help me to develop a realistic and healthy picture of my sinfulness, so that I may follow you more closely and, like Levi, leave everything else behind.



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit.

(MATTHEW 4:1–11)

JESUS, a commercial for a luxury car says that the car is designed entirely around *me*. And why not? Doesn't the whole world revolve around me and my wants and needs?

Sometimes I am tempted to think so. And that's why I am glad that you went into the desert ahead of me. I don't know if I could have said no to the temptation to use power and honor *my way*. But you insisted on doing things *God's way*, even if it meant that you stayed hungry and vulnerable and poor.

Jesus, I know that the same Spirit that led you into the desert leads me this Lent. This same Spirit invites me to say good-bye to a world built around me and to surrender my will to *God's will*. And it seems that God's will for me is that I build my world entirely around *you*—living with you, in you, and through you.

It's easy to get lost in the desert, Jesus. Thank you for staying close and showing me the way.



MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK

“Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty...?”

(MATTHEW 25:31–46)

Lord, I understand the question asked by those on the “goat” side in today’s gospel. It’s so easy to be caught up in my own affairs that I don’t even see the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger.... I know that you are in the poor and suffering, so it’s not that I can’t see you in them; it’s just that I so seldom notice them *at all*. And that means I’ve missed lots of opportunities to end up on your “sheep” side.

But it’s that sheep side that I really don’t understand. Whenever I give of myself to someone, I pat myself on the back for doing such a good job of following you. But these “sheep” of yours—they give of themselves so naturally that they don’t even seem to think of the good things they’re doing for you. They just do it, like parents feeding and clothing their children.

Jesus, I still have a way to go before I see myself ending up on the sheep side. Fill me with

your Spirit so that, someday, living your life of self-giving love will seem so natural, I won't even have to think about it anymore.



TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK

“Do not babble...” (MATTHEW 6:7-15)

Father, I hope I don't babble in prayer the way Jesus warns about here. Often I'm thinking “out loud” with you, and I take awhile to get to the point. I babble in prayer like I bumble around in daily life, a little lost, struggling to move ahead, not really quite sure what I am trying to say or do. But in both prayer and life, if I am open to your grace, sometimes something powerful breaks through.

It's the same with this wonderful prayer Jesus taught us. I know I often babble it without much thought of what it means for my life. But sometimes your powerful grace breaks through, and I suddenly realize I'm praying that your sovereignty will be established in every human