



Lenten Devotional: Week 1 1 – 7 March

Place an empty bowl on the family table or some other prominent place. Let it remain there throughout the week as a reminder and symbol of emptiness.

Early in the week:

Scripture: Psalm 63:1

*O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Reflection:

Lent leads us into the desert, where we come face to face with our own emptiness.

Emptiness can take on many forms. We may hunger or long for something that we cannot attain – a dream that has been dashed, perhaps, or a dissatisfied yearning for more than we have. We may lament and hold onto failures, as if carrying a sack of heavy stones that weighs us down. We may be awash in grief after the loss of a loved one or a broken relationship.

Emptiness can overwhelm us, making us vulnerable to temptations. Those temptations draw us away from God and away from the best of what God desires for us.

- What in my life causes me to feel empty or longing?
- When am I most vulnerable to fall prey to temptations? How do my daily habits and self-care (or lack of) contribute to my sense of emptiness? (e.g., when I am over-tired? stressed? not eating well? neglecting my spiritual life?)
- What one thing can I commit to change during this season of Lent?

Prayer:

Loving Christ, you know what it means to be hungry, to be tempted in the emptiness, to be vulnerable. I am not alone in my empty places, for you are there with me. Enable me this week to recognize my longings, and grant me the grace to turn to you when I feel vulnerable or tempted. Fill me with the awareness of your love and mercy around me, that I may find assurance in your presence always. Amen.

Going Deeper:

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

Reflection:

Fasting is a spiritual practice of emptying, creating space for deepening one's prayer life, while reminding us of our dependence on God. Traditionally, fasting involves abstaining from a weekly meal and dedicating that time to prayer. The money not spent for that meal is then donated to help others who hunger. Another form of fasting is to choose to abstain from a particular food or "indulgence" (meat, chocolate, alcohol, etc.) for the duration of the Lenten season. Other ways to honor the practice of fasting could include taking on a new practice of prayer, devotional study, or outreach, in order to refocus one's attention toward God.

- How can I or my family honor a fast this Lent?

Prayer:

Gracious Christ, you have invited me to draw closer to you. I offer myself to you in emptiness, seeking to be filled by your grace, your peace, and your mercy. Bless and guide me, so that I may better serve you. Amen.