

The Fast I Choose: *Living with Intentionality*

Prayers

Weekly Lenten Prayer Service

Please see your Lenten Orders for Praise & Prayer booklet.

Check in

Participants are invited to share a bit of their soul each week by answering this check-in question.

Are you living a meaningful life?

Sermon Focus

Participants should take turns reading the section below.

In the Early Christian Church, Lent was a season in which those who were becoming members of the body of Christ would prepare for their baptism. That baptism would take place on Easter morning. The community would gather the evening before. And in the morning the catechumens, submerged in the water, would rise from those waters just as the sun was rising, just as the Son of God also rose on Easter morning.

Lent for those catechumens, and for us today, is a season of self-examination, reflection, fasting, repentance, and growing closer to God. Lent was then and is now a time of learning and discernment and intentionality. Intentionally choosing to follow Jesus. Intentionally choosing to be part of the holy community.

During this Lenten Study, we are looking at the five baptismal promises that we make and that we reaffirm every time a new person is baptized or enters the body of Christ as a member of our congregation (to faithfully participate in the ministries of the Church by our *prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness*). This week we are looking at the promise of intentionally participating in the life of the church by our *prayers*.

Prayer is deeply important to some Christians, and for others, not so much. But prayer is something that Jesus lifts up as important, and as an everyday practice. When Jesus teaches about prayer, he encourages us to pray sincerely, not just to fit in or to look good or for personal gain. And Jesus encourages us to pray not just alone, but also in community.

Our sermon for this week lifted up how when Jesus says, “pray for those who persecute you,” that the “you” is plural. It may be a better translation to say, “Pray for those who persecute y’all.” This is a reminder that we are to pray for others in

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our community. When others are persecuted, we are to pray for them, not just for ourselves.

Years ago, when learning to chant and pray the Psalms, I (*Pastor Winter*) found myself uncomfortable with some of the content. The Catholic nun I was learning from encouraged me to remember that I didn't have to relate to the words of the psalmist, because I was not praying for myself. I was praying for the person who was experiencing the words of the psalmist; a person I may never meet, a person who may be on the other side of the planet.

This is one of the most important results of prayer, that we become more aware of people, the needs of others, the struggles others face, and the joys and successes that others celebrate. Praying for one's self is perfectly fine, but as we discern this Lent about how we live into our baptismal promises, how we participate in the ministries of the church together, it is our task to examine what prayer means within the body.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it look like to intentionally participate in the life of the church by our *prayers*?
2. Reflect on your prayer life. How often do you pray? How long do you pray? Is prayer something you look forward to?
3. How have you prayed for those who are being persecuted in the world?

Spiritual Practice

Each week of Lent we will participate in a different prayer practice.

Prayer Journaling: Prayer journaling is not for everyone, but maybe it's for you! Your Prayer Journal has been provided by the church so you can try this spiritual practice out. Read through the first couple of pages of your Prayer Journal together and then write your own personal commitment on the first page. Reflect as a group on how you think this practice will go.

Closing Prayer

Have a new person lead the prayer each week.

God of our baptism, we praise you for the calling you have placed in each of us. Be with us on this Lenten journey. Bring us closer to you in these coming weeks, closer with your church, and closer with each other. **Amen.**