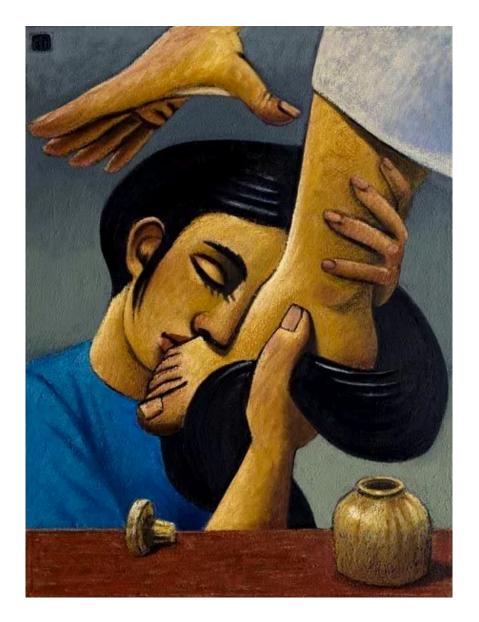
The Church of the Incarnation



Lent 2025 \ a guide for prayer



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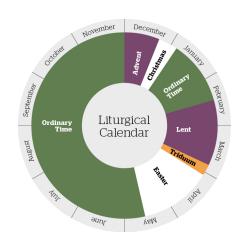
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23 Scriptures for Daily Reading

Introduction

The Season of Lent

Lent is a forty-day journey of preparation, self-denial, repentance, and renewal. It begins on Ash Wednesday and continues through



Holy Saturday, when we await the burst of resurrection life on Easter Sunday. The lenten journey echoes Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Jesus' forty days of testing in the wilderness. The wilderness has a way of softening our hearts and quieting the noise outside us and within us. It's an opportunity to come back home to God, to deepen our attentiveness to Him. It isn't for the spiritually self-satisfied. Every ordinary disciple of Jesus is encouraged to set aside this time to fan the flame of God's grace.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is drawn from a mode of prayer designed by the Irish Jesuits called *Sacred Space*. Some will use it as a complement to the Morning or Evening Daily Office from the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) as a way to slow down and savor the Scripture readings. Or it can be used on its own.

The left side of the guide provides artwork to contemplate and a short quote to consider each time you follow these prayers. The right side guides you through seven movements. There's no right or wrong amount of time to spend with any given movement; the goal is to come to a place of listening attentiveness to the Lord.

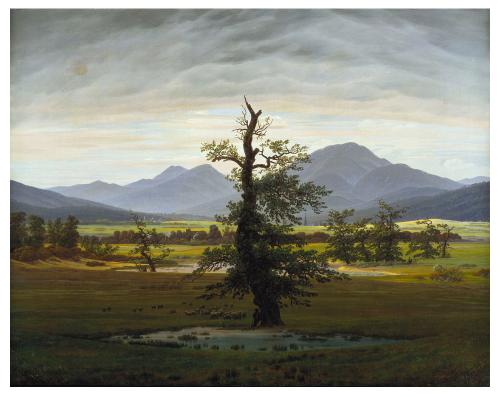
In the back of this guide, we've provided an example of "Family Prayer" from the BCP. This can be prayed each night alone or with friends or those in your household. Additional abbreviated forms for Morning, Midday, and Evening, as well as the full Daily Office, can be found in the BCP itself (beginning on p.3).

The Practices

- 1. **Worship**. Adjust your schedule to participate in these additional services.
 - Ash Wednesday, **March 5** (5 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.)
 - Maundy Thursday, **April 17** (5 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.)
 - Good Friday, **April 18** (5 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.)
 - Easter Sunrise Service, April 19 (time TBA)
 - Easter Sunday, April 20 (9 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.)
- 2. Fasting. In a fast, we deny ourselves the necessities of food and drink in order to experience a physical lack that points us to our fundamental need for Christ. Sundays always celebrate the resurrection and therefore are never fast days. During Lent, we participate in two types of fasting:
 - † The **Lenten Fast** involves abstaining, for the entirety of Lent, from some food or drink item we normally enjoy (such as meat, caffeine, alcohol, etc.). The low-grade hunger we feel points us daily to Jesus, the true giver of joy and satisfaction.
 - † A **Total Fast** is practiced at the beginning and end of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, we fast for the entire day. The second total fast begins on the evening of Maundy Thursday until breakfast during the Easter Sunrise Service or Holy Communion later that morning. During the total fast, we experience real hunger pains, allowing us to turn our attention to our longing and hunger for Christ.
- 3. **Scripture and Prayer.** During Lent, we as a church "turn up the dial" just a notch on our spiritual disciplines of prayer and Scripture reading. If your own habits have fallen by the wayside, this season provides a wonderful chance to start afresh.
- 4. **Engaging Lent with the Senses.** Many people place a cross in their home as an external reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and our call to live cross-shaped lives. When doing your devotions, lighting a candle can provide a tangible reminder that Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12) and that our prayers are a pleasing aroma in God's presence (Revelation 5:12).

ENTERING LENT

Ash Wednesday, 3.5 - Saturday, 3.8



Caspar David Friedrich | *The Lonely Tree* Oil on canvas | 1822

"Sad brightness": the sadness of my exile, of the waste I have made of my life; the brightness of God's presence and forgiveness, the joy of the recovered desire for God, the peace of the recovered home.

Such is the climate of lenten worship; such is its first and general impact on my soul.

– Alexander Schmemann, *Great Lent*

Allow yourself to become physically still. Then breathe in slowly and deeply, exhaling more slowly. As you inhale, silently pray "Lord Jesus Christ," and as you exhale, silently pray "have mercy on me, a sinner." Repeat this several times.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Jesus, you are present with me; you satisfy the hungers of my heart.

FREEDOM

God is not foreign to my freedom. Instead, the Spirit breathes life into my most intimate desires, gently nudging me toward all that is good. I ask for the grace to let myself be enfolded by the Spirit.

CONSCIOUSNESS

In the presence of my loving Redeemer, I comb through the events of the past day, beginning with the most recent events and working backwards. What brought joy, thankfulness, pain, worry?

THE WORD OF GOD

"For now, treat the Scriptures of God as the face of God; melt in his presence" (St. Augustine). I read, seeking God's face and remaining open to his direction.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

What jumped out to me as I read? I think of this as the Holy Spirit "highlighting" that word or phrase. I speak to Jesus, vulnerably, honestly, about what that word or phrase stirred in me.

CONCLUSION

I thank God for his presence, that he desires to be with me. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

- Collect for Ash Wednesday, Book of Common Prayer

THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT Sunday, 3.9 – Saturday, 3.15



Fra Angelico
The Mocking of Christ with the Virgin and Saint Dominic
in the Convent of San Marco | Fresco | 1439-43 | Italian

How sweet was it to me, to be suddenly without those sweet earthly vanities. And those things which I was afraid to lose—with joy I let go; for you who are the true and only sweetness, did cast out those from me, and instead of them did enter in yourself—who is more delightful than all pleasure, and more clear than all light.

- St. Augustine, Confessions

"In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15). I take a few, unhurried moments to quiet my mind and heart.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Let me bring myself, darkness and all, into the light of Christ's presence today.

FREEDOM

I need to rise above the noise—the noise that interrupts, that separates, the noise that isolates.

I need to listen to God again.

CONSCIOUSNESS

How am I feeling today? Am I at peace? Has God shown me good things today? I give thanks. Am I restless or uneasy? Am I carrying any guilty burdens? I lay these before the Lord.

THE WORD OF GOD

In Scripture, my Creator speaks directly to me. May the Holy Spirit shed light into the dark corners of my mind and heart through his Word.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

How is God the Spirit stirring me as I read? Am I calmed and led to patience? Is He teaching me something new? Is my conscience pricked toward repentance?

CONCLUSION

I thank God for the time we've spent together. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations, and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- Collect for the First Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer

THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT Sunday, 3.16 - Saturday, 3.22



Francisco de Zurbarán | *Agnus Dei* Oil on Canvas | 37.3x62cm | 1635-1640

Fires ordinarily blaze in the open, but not so with prayer. Prayer is like a hidden fire whose effects are seen in our humanity and in God's response. We are made for God, and thus there is nothing more human than prayer – that open stance in relation to the living God who has come to us in Jesus. However, on the basis of its hiddenness, we easily neglect prayer and settle for less when God wants to give us so much more of himself.

-Craig Bartholomew

As you're able, sit up straight on the edge of your seat, feet flat on the floor, and breathe in through your diaphragm. Exhale slowly. When distracting thoughts arise, gently bring your attention back to this silent prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner."

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The very One who cares for me is present with me now. I take a few moments to become aware of His presence.

FREEDOM

I will ask God's help to be free from my preoccupations, to be open to God in this time of prayer, and to come to know, love, and serve God more.

CONSCIOUSNESS

I look back, moment by moment, over the past day.
I notice the many things God has provided and give him thanks.
I honestly acknowledge where I have sinned and ask forgiveness.

THE WORD OF GOD

After reading the passage once, I re-read the same passage again a few times. What strikes me? I dwell on those things in God's presence.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

What feelings spring up as I pray with the Word of God? I imagine Jesus sitting with me in the room, and I speak these things to him as a close friend.

CONCLUSION

I thank God that he desires to be with me, and I thank him for his presence.

When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities that may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

- Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer

THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT = Sunday, 3.23 - Saturday, 3.29



Giotto di Bondone | *The Arrest of Christ* in the Arena Chapel Fresco | 1301-1305 | Italian

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

- C.S. Lewis

This is the moment when I begin to "unfurl my sails to the Holy Spirit" (St. Jerome). I cannot make anything happen on my own strength, but I can prepare myself for God to speak to me. I still myself in mind, body, and spirit.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

I bask for a moment in the staggering thought that Christ is the source, substance, and ultimate hope of my very life.

FREEDOM

Everything has the potential to draw forth from me a fuller love and life. Yet my desires are often fixed on illusions of fulfillment. I ask that God would unite my heart to fear his Name (Ps. 86:11).

CONSCIOUSNESS

Knowing that God loves me unconditionally, I can afford to be honest about how I am. What are my fears and desires? What do I expect from God? What am I willing to give to God—from my emotions and talents, thoughts and energy? And how do I feel now? I share my feelings openly with the Lord.

THE WORD OF GOD

I read today's passage slowly, repeatedly, paying attention to where the Holy Spirit may be taking hold of me.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

What struck me as I read? I think of this as the Holy Spirit "highlighting" that word or phrase. I speak to Jesus, vulnerably, honestly, about what stirs in me as I ruminate on today's passage.

CONCLUSION

I thank God for the time we've spent together. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Heavenly Father, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you: Look with compassion upon the heartfelt desires of your servants, and purify our disordered affections, that we may behold your eternal glory in the face of Christ Jesus; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

- Collect for the Third Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer

THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT Sunday, 3.30 – Saturday, 4.5



Detail of *Pieta with Donors* Limestone | ca. 1515 | French

"Aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs" (1 Thess. 4:11). To...be quiet refers to a willingness to be overlooked "out there" and to forgo what the world desires so as to be faithful to God with the portion given.

But how can we find a stamina for being overlooked in the world unless quiet also describes a Sabbath of the heart moment by moment with God? A Sabbath heart describes an inner life pursuing rest in him. We don't fear the loss of worldly attention only because we enjoy company with true treasure. His attention is enough . . . quiet like this pays off.

- Zack Eswine

As you're able, sit up straight on the edge of your seat, feet flat on the floor, and breathe in through your diaphragm. Exhale slowly. When distracting thoughts arise, gently bring your attention back to this silent prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner."

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

I pause for a moment and reflect on God's life-giving presence in my body, in everything around me, in the whole of my life.

FREEDOM

"In these days, God taught me as a schoolteacher teaches a pupil" (St. Ignatius). I remind myself there are things God has to teach me yet, and I ask for the grace to hear them and let them change me.

CONSCIOUSNESS

How am I within myself today? Am I particularly preoccupied, down, or tired? If so, can I resist the temptation to pile on anxious thoughts and meet those feelings with stillness and trust?

THE WORD OF GOD

"[Hurry] is deadly when dealing with a Word that holds the mystery of God" (Mariano Magrassi). Slowly, expectantly, I read and re-read today's passage.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

Do I find that God is challenging or confronting me through the Scriptures? Where do I sense he is pushing me to grow? I sit with these thoughts and ask Jesus for the grace to follow him.

CONCLUSION

I thank God for his presence, that he desires to be with me. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT Sunday, 4.6 - Saturday, 4.12



Julia Stankova | *Baptism* of *Christ* Painting on canvas | 2017 | Bulgarian

Idolatry is committed, not merely by setting up false gods, but also by setting up false devils; by making men afraid of war or alcohol, or economic law, when they should be afraid of spiritual corruption and cowardice.

- G. K. Chesterton

Take a moment to settle your body. Take several slow, deep breaths. In this, I am following God's own will for me: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"I am the true vine" (John 15:1). Jesus, apart from you I can do nothing. I take these quiet moments now to become aware of your presence with me.

FREEDOM

I will ask God's help to free me from preoccupation and busyness, so that I may hear his voice and respond to it.

CONSCIOUSNESS

To be conscious of something is to be aware of it. As I look back over the previous day, what thoughts have occupied my mind? Do I bring any regrets here with me? In God's presence, can I confess them and release them into his hands?

THE WORD OF GOD

"Scripture is an unfathomable world. . . . We may venture there, but we can never say we have reached the bottom" (Mariano Magrassi). I explore today's reading slowly, taking note of what strikes me.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

I speak to Jesus about what this piece of Scripture has struck in me. Does a memory, an interaction with someone, or a feeling arise in my mind? I explore that with Jesus, friend to friend.

CONCLUSION

I thank God for the time we've spent together. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- Collect for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday, 4.13 - Holy Saturday, 4.19



John Martin | The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host Watercolor and oil with brown ink on paper 1836 | British

Christ is the infinite self-expenditure of God. . . . Excess is God's trademark in his creation; as the Fathers put it, "God does not reckon his gifts by the measure." At the same time excess is also the real foundation and form of salvation history, which in the last analysis is nothing other than the truly breathtaking fact that God, in an incredible outpouring of himself, expends not only a universe but his own self in order to lead man, a speck of dust, to salvation. . . . The purely calculating mind will always find it absurd that for man God himself should be expended. Only the lover can understand the folly of a love to which prodigality is a law and excess alone is sufficient.

– Joseph Ratzinger

Allow yourself to become physically still. Then breathe in slowly and deeply, exhaling more slowly. As you inhale, silently pray "Lord Jesus Christ," and as you exhale, silently pray "have mercy on me, a sinner." Repeat this several times.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The very same Lord who came to earth to suffer for my sins knocks at the door and wants to be with me. I simply sit for a moment in his loving presence.

FREEDOM

I ask the God of all grace for freedom from distractions, afflicting thoughts and feelings, and every hidden resistance to him held in my heart.

CONSCIOUSNESS

How am I really feeling? Lighthearted? Heavy-hearted? I may be very much at peace, happy to be here. Equally, I may be frustrated, worried, or angry. I acknowledge how I really am. It is the real me that the Lord loves.

THE WORD OF GOD

I'm now prepared to open myself to God's Word for me. "All the words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears" (Ezekiel 3:10).

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

Has God's Word moved me, or do I feel cold? I turn and share my feelings with Jesus, as if he is sitting with me now.

CONCLUSION

I thank God that he desires to be with me and for his presence. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, in your tender love for us you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon himself our nature, and to suffer death upon the Cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and come to share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

- Collect for Palm Sunday, Book of Common Prayer

EASTER WEEK

Sunday, 4.20 - Saturday, 4.26



Ivanka Demchuk | Resurrection
Tempera and acrylic on wood | Ukrainian

I have found him whom my soul loves: I grasp him and will not let him go. I embrace you, my Jesus, and experience the joy of my love. I encompass you, the treasure of my heart, from whom I have all that is mine. May my mind feel, I beg you, the power of your presence. May it taste how sweet you are, O Lord, so that, captivated by your love, it may seek nothing outside of you and love nothing if not because of you.

- from a Cistercian Prayer

As you're able, sit up straight on the edge of your seat, feet flat on the floor, and breathe in through your diaphragm. Exhale slowly. When distracting thoughts arise, gently bring your attention back to this silent prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner."

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

To be present is to arrive as one is and open up to the other. At this instant, as I arrive here, God is present waiting for me. God always arrives before me, desiring to connect with me even more than my most intimate friend. I take a moment and greet my loving God.

FREEDOM

Lord, may the Holy Spirit whom you have sent help me to understand your ways, and guide me in the paths of life.

CONSCIOUSNESS

In the presence of my loving Creator, I look honestly at my feelings over the last day, the highs, the lows, the level ground. Can I see where the Lord has been present?

THE WORD OF GOD

God speaks to each one of us individually in Scripture. I attentively read the passage, re-reading it and dwelling further upon any word or phrase that strikes me.

Turn to p. 23 for today's reading.

CONVERSATION

I imagine the risen Lord Jesus here with me. I speak with him openly and honestly about what I have encountered in the living Scriptures today.

CONCLUSION

I thank God for the time we've spent together. When I'm ready, I pour my heart into this prayer:

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may, by your life-giving Spirit, be delivered from sin and raised from death; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- Collect for Easter Sunday, Book of Common Prayer

Family Prayer

At the Close of Day

The following or some other verse of Scripture is said

I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; for you, LORD, only, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:8

Psalm 134

- 1 Behold now, praise the LORD, * all you servants of the LORD,
- 2 You that stand by night in the house of the LORD, * even in the courts of the house of our God.
- 3 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary * and sing praises unto the LORD.
- 4 The LORD who made heaven and earth * give you blessing out of Zion.

A Reading from Holy Scripture

You keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on you, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD for ever, for the LORD God is an everlasting rock.

Isaiah 26:3-4

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others. It is appropriate that prayers of thanksgiving for the blessings of the day, and penitence for our sins, be included.

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Concluding Sentence

The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us, this night and evermore. Amen.

Scriptures

The Beginning of Lent

Ash Wed	†	Luke 18:9–14
Thur, 3.6	+	Matt. 15:29—16:12
Fri, 3.7	†	Matt. 16:13-end
Sat, 3.8	†	Matt. 17:1-23

First Week of Lent

Sun, 3.9	†	Matt. 17:24—18:14
Mon, 3.10	†	Matt. 18:15-end
Tues, 3.11	†	Matt. 19:1-15
Wed, 3.12	†	Matt. 19:16-20:16
Thur, 3.13	†	Matt. 20:17-end
Fri, 3.14	†	Matt. 21:1-22
Sat, 3.15	†	Matt. 21:23-end

Second Week of Lent

Sun, 3.16	†	Matt. 22:1-33
Mon, 3.17	+	Matt. 22:34-23:12
Tues, 3.18	+	Matt. 23:13-end
Wed, 3.19	+	Matt. 24:1-28
Thur, 3.20	+	Matt. 24:29-end
Fri, 3.21	+	Matt. 25:1-30
Sat, 3.22	†	Matt. 25:31-end

Third Week of Lent

Sun, 3.23 Mon, 3.24 Tues, 3.25		Matt. 26:1–30 Matt. 26:31–56 *Luke 1:26–38
*Feast of	the	Annunciation
Wed, 3.26	†	Matt. 26:57-end
Thur, 3.27	†	Matt. 27:1-26
Fri, 3.28	†	Matt. 27:27-56
Sat, 3.29	†	Matt. 27:57-28 end

Fourth Week of Lent

Sun, 3.30	†	Mark 1:1-13
Mon, 3.31	†	Mark 1:14-31
Tues, 4.1	†	Mark 1:32-end
Wed, 4.2	†	Mark 2:1-22
Thur, 4.3	†	Mark 2:23-3:12
Fri, 4.4	†	Mark 3:13-end
Sat, 4.5	†	Mark 4:1-34

Fifth Week of Lent

Sun, 4.6	†	Mark 4:35-5:20
Mon, 4.7	†	Mark 5:21-end
Tues, 4.8	†	Mark 6:1-29
Wed, 4.9	†	Mark 6:30-end
Thur, 4.10	†	Mark 7:1-23
Fri, 4.11	†	Mark 7:24-8:10
Sat, 4.12	†	Mark 8:11-end

Holy Week

Sun, 4.13	†	Mark 9:1-29
Mon, 4.14	†	Mark 9:30-end
Tues, 4.15	†	Mark 10:1-31
Wed, 4.16	†	Mark 10:32-ena
Thur, 4.17	†	John 13:1–20
Fri, 4.18	†	John 18
Sat, 4.19	†	Heb. 4

Easter Week

Sun, 4.20	†	Acts 2:22-32
Mon, 4.21	†	Mark 13:14-end
Tues, 4.22	†	Mark 14:1-25
Wed, 4.23	†	Mark 14:26-52
Thur, 4.24	+	Mark 14:53-end
Fri, 4.25	+	Mark 15
Sat, 4.26	+	Mark 16

† Scriptures are taken from the Daily Office readings found in the BCP (pp. 742–746).



O God, you are my God; earnestly 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.